A SOURCEBOOK

WITCHCRA

IN RUSSIA AND UKR

1000–1900

EDITED BY

VALERIE A. KIVELSON AND CHRISTINE D.

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We dedicate this volume to our esteemed colleagues, Kateryna Dysa, Olga Kosheleva, Aleksandr Lavrov, and Elena B. Smilianskaia, for their intellectual insights, generosity, support, and, above all, friendship. Without their substantive contributions, beginning with the inspiring Paris workshop on Witchcraft in Russia and Ukraine, and continuing with their willingness to share transcriptions of archival documents and their ongoing intellectual support, this volume would not have come into being.

In the name of the Father, the Son and Holy Spirit. I, the servant of God (name), shall arise and bless myself, crossing myself I shall leave the hut by the doors, I shall leave the yard by the gates. I shall go out onto the wide road with my face to the east and my back to the west. I shall bow and pray. In the open country on the wide plain there are four brothers, the wild winds, east, west, south and north. As you [winds] served the true Christ, the king of heaven, so may you serve me, the good servant of God (name). Take from me, the servant of God, grief and dryness, and black misery, take them away and do not let them drop against the wind or with the wind, against the sun or with the sun, against the stream and with the stream, and through the flowing brooks and swift rivers, through high mountains and dark forests, through iron fences. Walking from the hall, or sitting on the stair or bed, or lying on the bed, or sitting at the table, with his father or mother or sister or brother, or friend or all his family, take him by the white hands and instill in his white body and ardent heart and black liver and seventy-seven veins (sinews) and seven joints that he may not live without me, the slave of God N, nor eat nor sleep, that he may agonize with a deadly anguish, an anguish he may not eat or drink away, or wash away in the bathhouse, but only run after me, take me by the neck, kiss me on the lips, and look no more on his father or mother, or sister or family or anyone at all; so may he think of me, slave of God N, during the day in sunlight and at night by moonlight, at dawn and sunset, at the new moon and the old moon and at the quarters of the moon and on the days in between. May my words be firm forever and ever, Amen!

— 1860s love spell recorded by P. N. Rybnikov, *Pesni, sobrannye P. N. Rybnikovym*, 2nd ed., ed. E. A. Guzinskii (Moscow, 1910; repr. Moscow, 1991), 214–15; translated in W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 181–82.

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TIMELINE

862	Legendary date for founding of the Rus state
c. 988	Grand Prince Vladimir/Volodymyr of Kyiv converts to Christianity
1237–1242	Mongol conquest
1240–1480	Appanage period
1253	Creation of the Kingdom of Halych-Volhynia
1325	Metropolitan of Kyiv and All Rus transfers seat to Moscow
1340s–1366	Lithuanian-Polish rivalry over territories of Halych-Volhynia
1366	Poland gains control over Halych and a small part of Volhynia, with the rest of Volhynia remaining under Lithuanian control
1386	Founding of the Polish-Lithuanian Union under one crown
1437–1439	Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches negotiate a short-lived union (Ferrara-Florence)
1453	Constantinople falls to Ottoman Turks
1462–1505	Reign of Ivan III of Muscovy

1478	Muscovy defeats Novgorod
1480	Conventional date for end of Tatar domination
1497	Muscovy's *Sudebnik* law code issued; updated in 1550

1500

1533–1584	Reign of Ivan IV (the Terrible) in Muscovy
1547	Coronation of Ivan (the Terrible) as tsar
1565–1572	Ivan the Terrible's reign of terror: the Oprichnina
1569	Creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, with most Ukrainian lands coming under Polish rule
1596	Union of Brest established the Greek Catholic (Uniate) Church in the Polish lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth
1598	Riurikid line in Muscovy dies out with death of Fedor
1598–1605	Boris Godunov is chosen as first nondynastic tsar of Muscovy
1598–1613	Time of Troubles in Muscovy

1600

1605–1606	Reign of the First False Dmitrii in Muscovy
1613	Mikhail Fedorovich Romanov chosen as new Muscovite tsar by an Assembly of the Land (Zemskii Sobor)

1648–1654	Cossack rebellions against Polish rule, led by Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi
1649	Creation of the Hetmanate
1654	The Hetmanate comes under the protection of Muscovy but enjoys independence in foreign policy matters; Muscovy annexes Eastern Ukrainian territories outside of the Hetmanate
1667	Treaty of Andrusovo divides Ukrainian territories between Muscovy and Poland, with the former having control of Left-Bank Ukraine and the city of Kyiv and Poland control of Right-Bank Ukraine. A diminished Hetmanate retains autonomy under Russian rule.
1667	Muscovy's Patriarch Nikon deposed; beginning of the Church Schism
1682	Peter assumes the Muscovite throne jointly with his half-brother Ivan and with his half-sister Sophia as regent

1700

1703	Founding of St. Petersburg
1721	Peter the Great assumes title of emperor of Russia
1725	Death of Peter the Great
1725–1727	Reign of Catherine I of Russia
1727–1730	Reign of Peter II of Russia
1730	Constitutional crisis in Russia; struggle over terms of succession
1730–1740	Reign of Anna Ioannovna of Russia
1741	Succession struggle in Russia: Ivan VI; coup installs Elizabeth Petrovna

1741–1761	Reign of Elizabeth Petrovna of Russia
1761–1762	Reign of Peter III of Russia; coup installs Catherine II
1762–1796	Reign of Catherine II (the Great) of Russia
1764	Abolition of the military office of Hetman in the Hetmanate
1772	First Partition of Poland, whereby Austria gains control of Halych/Galicia and Russia takes territories east of the Rivers Dvina, Drut, and Dnieper and sections of Livonia and Belorussia
1781	Abolition of the Hetmanate
1791	Pale of Settlement established
1793	Second Partition of Poland in which Russia gains control of Right-Bank Ukraine, Volhynia, and the rest of Belorussia
1795	Third Partition of Poland
1796	Accession of Paul I to the Russian throne

1800

1801	Assassination of Paul; accession of Alexander I to the Russian throne
1801–1825	Reign of Alexander I
1812	Napoleon invades Russia
1813–1814	Alexander I pursues Napoleon
1815	Duchy of Warsaw—much of it absorbed into Russia as the Congress Kingdom

1825–1855	Reign of Nicholas I
1855–1881	Reign of Alexander II
1861	Alexander II issues decree emancipating the serfs
1881–1894	Reign of Alexander III
1894–1917	Reign of Nicholas II

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The translations also draw on the work of numerous people. Most of the documents we have translated ourselves, again with the kind and generous assistance of our colleagues from the seminar—especially Katya Dysa, who provided translations of all of the Ukrainian and Polish texts—and of the invaluable Olga Kosheleva, who patiently led us through the torments of

impenetrable passages. Nikolaos Chrissidis, Olga Maiorova, and Andrei Toporkov also helped us sort out some intractable terminology. Alexander Kamenskii and Gary Marker steered us toward useful sources.

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ABBREVIATIONS

ARCHIVES, PUBLICATIONS, AND LOCATIONS

ChOIDR	*Chteniia v Imperatorskom obshchestve istorii i drevnostei rossiiskikh, pri Moskovskom universitete*. 264 vols. Moscow: Universitetskaia tipografiia, 1846–1918.
GAVO	Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Vologodskoi oblasti (State Archive of the Vologda Region)
PLC	Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth
PSPR	*Polnoe sobranie postanovlenii i rasporiazhenii po vedomstvu pravoslavnago ispovedaniia rossiiskoi imperii*. 19 vols. St. Petersburg: V Synodal'noi tipografii, 1869–1914.
PSRL	*Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*. 43 vols. as of 2004. St. Petersburg and Moscow: various publishers, 1841–.
PSZ	*Polnoe sobranie zakonov rossiiskoi imperii*. Series 1, 1649–1825, 45 vols. St. Petersburg: Otdelenie sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva kantseliarii, 1830.
RGADA	Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi arkhiv drevnikh aktov (Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents), Moscow
TsDIAK	Tsentral'nyi derzhavnyi istorychnyi arkhiv Ukrainy, Kyiv (Central State Historical Archive of Ukraine, Kyiv)

WITHIN ARCHIVAL CITATIONS

ark.	*arkush* (folio)
ch.	*chast'* (part)
d.	*delo* (document)
ed. khr.	*edinitsa khraneniia* (document)
koll.	*kollektsiia* (collection)
l.	*list* (folio, plural *ll.*) When a single trial occupies an entire document, the number precedes the *ll.*)
ob.	*oborot* (verso)
spr.	*sprava* (case)
stol	bureau
stlb.	*stolbets* (file, stack of papers stored as a unit)
stlb.	*stolpik* small stack, part of a subdivided file

NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION

Throughout the collection, the editors' editorial remarks appear in italics within parentheses. Short additions of unitalicized words in square brackets fill in missing words or terms and concepts understood in the original but hard to follow in English. Excerpts that have already been published in English translation by others pose their own formatting problems and stand here as exceptions to our general rules. In such cases, we generally defer to the earlier translators' choices and reproduce the documents as they published them. We retain their spellings of words and names. We also identify those documents where brackets appear in the original English translation. In these infrequent cases only, additions and comments within the brackets are those included by the original translators, while our own editorial remarks and short additions are italicized within parentheses.

In the case of legal decrees, we kept our translations as close to the original language as possible, but in the translation of the trial materials we cut the repetitions of words and titles that litter these fascinating documents, and we smoothed out awkward syntax. For readability's sake we also replaced pronouns with proper names and vice versa. We made other minor changes when appropriate and inserted subheadings into the documents. We kept ellipses to a minimum. At the end of the day, however,

these texts concern magic and witchcraft, and so the exercise of rendering them fully clear and logical may, at times, be misguided.

We have used the modified Library of Congress system when presenting Russian or Ukrainian words, but we have simplified proper nouns and some recurrent terms by dropping the soft sign (generally indicated with an apostrophe or prime). All bibliographic citations, however, retain the soft sign. For well-known individuals and places we have used common English spellings, as for example, Peter the Great or Moscow or Kyiv. All of the records from the courts under Polish-Lithuanian rule employed in the collection were originally written in Polish (with a smattering of Latin phrases to enhance the record's official nature), the language of official state business, rather than Ukrainian, the spoken language of the region. Only the documents from the autonomous Hetmanate tended to be written in Ukrainian, reflecting its strong Orthodox Cossack identity. In the late eighteenth century, the official Russian language was employed in cases dealing with the Ukrainian regions under its authority. In cases from the Ukrainian areas where the documents were in either Polish or Russian, the Ukrainian version of a name or place follows the Polish or Russian spelling on first mention only (that first mention may be either in the introduction or in the document itself) to provide some sense of local, everyday usage in contrast to official usage, which subjugated ethnic minorities. In the documents from Muscovy, state authority was able to subjugate its population through the use of nominative forms and practices, which ensured that Muscovites of all classes used self-abnegating diminutives in their petitions to the tsar and his officials.

Names and Patronymics

Russian Names

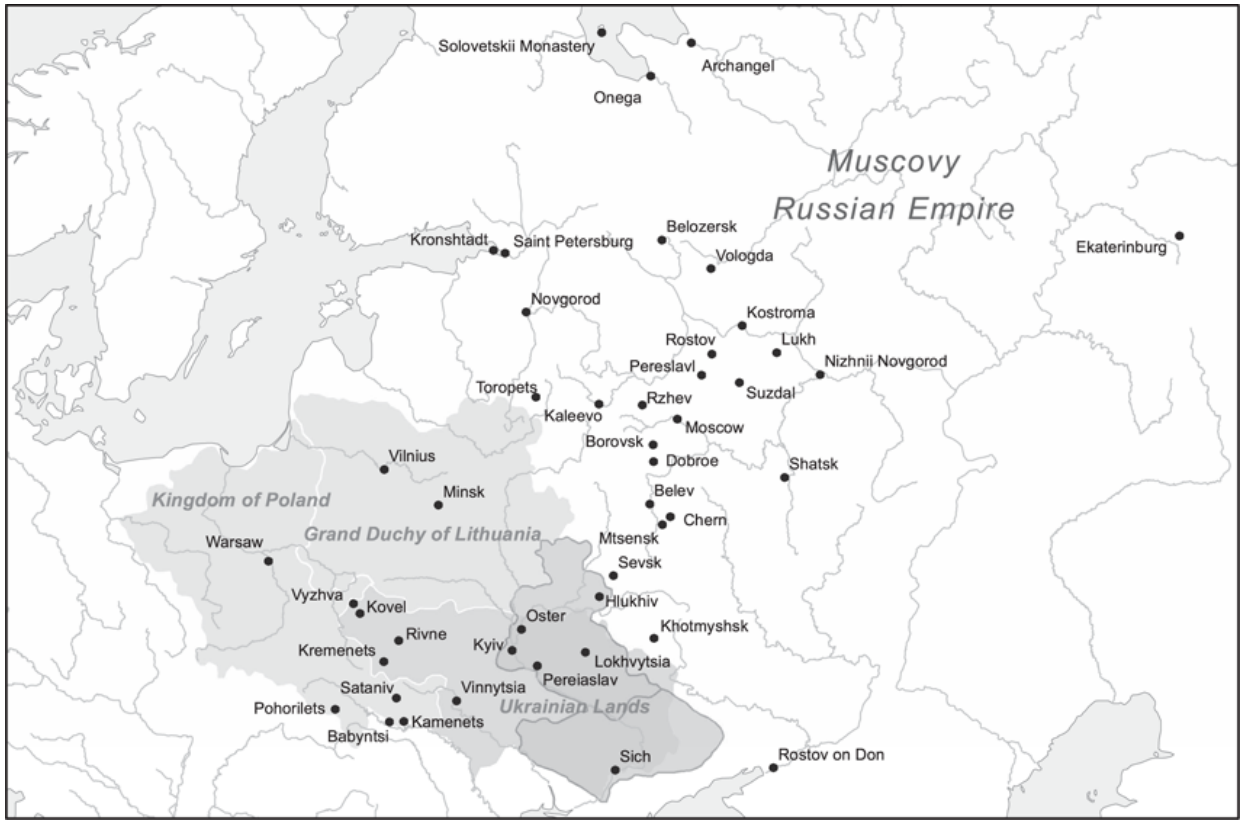
Russian peasants rarely had fixed last names until the nineteenth century, and last names did not become universal until after emancipation in 1861, though sometimes a nickname or profession served in lieu of last name (Popov, priest's son; Sapozhnik, cobbler; Krasilshchik, dyer).[1] Already in the

Muscovite period, members of the highest elite used formal patronymics ending in -ich (son of) or -na (daughter of). These would eventually become standard throughout the society, but through the eighteenth century, people of lesser ranks used possessive forms of their father's first names as patronymics, for instance: Ilia, Andrei's son (*Il'ia Andreev syn*). Women identified themselves with reference to their father's names and to their husband's as well, as, for instance, the widow Aniutka, Danil's daughter, Ilia's wife. Because these forms can get unwieldy, we have sacrificed consistency in favor of comprehensibility. Where possible, we preserve the forms of the text, but as a general rule, when the "son of" or "daughter of" formula is used, we have substituted a truncated form of the patronymic (Ilia Andreev) in place of the full form (Ilia Andrei's son).

Russian naming practices stabilized in the second half of the nineteenth century, so figures in later cases predictably have first names, patronymics, and last names. Last names also have gendered forms, with male forms usually ending in -skii or -ov, and female names ending in -skaia or -ova. So, within a single family a man would be known as Glinskii or Dolgorukov, while a female in the line would carry the last name Glinskaia or Dolgorukova.

Ukrainian Names

In the documents Ukrainian women are sometimes identified by a feminized form of their husbands' given names and then, as surnames became more common in the late seventeenth through eighteenth centuries, by a feminized form of their husbands' surnames. Thus Iatsko's (Iatsko being a given name) wife was at times referred to as Iatsykha, and Iatsko Tkach's wife was called Iatsykha Tkachykha. Variations of these names also occurred. Thus in a single document we find Khvedir's (Khvedir being a first name) wife referred to as Khvedirykha, Khvedchykha, and Khvediryva! Women were called by their married names by both their spouses and acquaintances. The practice is still rather common in Ukraine.



Map 1: Muscovy and Imperial Russia

Map 2: Ukrainian Lands in the Early Modern Period

INTRODUCTION

Witchcraft beliefs and practices have attracted scholarly and popular attention throughout the centuries and across the globe. Over the past several decades, historians have studied nearly every facet of witchcraft belief and persecution in the premodern and early modern West. They have explored representations in art and literature; examined intellectual, legal, and religious dimensions of witchcraft belief; and uncovered the role played by gender and concepts of the body in shaping concepts of witchcraft. Where earlier generations of historians of witchcraft generally focused on medieval and early modern Western Europe and New England, anthropologists most often conducted their studies of cultures of magic in the contemporary world outside of the industrialized and postindustrial urban societies of the West.[1] In recent decades, scholars of both disciplines have striven to transcend these geographic and chronological divisions, to widen their frames and view the phenomenon in more inclusive and holistic terms. Among historians the push to expand out from a Western European comfort zone to the peripheries of Europe began with an important 1990 collection edited by Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen.[2] The journal *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* has worked actively to open the doors still farther and to include more non-Western material and perspectives from more disciplines. Anthropologists now recognize how seamlessly witchcraft and modernity interconnect, and with what horrifying results, while

historians have come to appreciate the fertile material that survives to document witchcraft practices outside of the West.[3]

In this expansive spirit, we offer this set of documents on Russian and Ukrainian witchcraft from the Middle Ages to the turn of the twentieth century. With this volume, we invite students, scholars, and interested readers to expand and enrich the field by digging deeply (or inquiring casually) into an unfamiliar magical terrain.

Like their European neighbors, Russia and the Ukrainian lands recorded incidents of witchcraft and sorcery from the times of the earliest written sources, and along with other Christian cultures, they formally condemned the practice of magic outside of the Church. In synch with their European contemporaries, they saw spikes in formal legal prosecution during the early modern period. In the case of Russia this was a time of ambitious state building and expansion of the tsarist court system. Formal trials of witches here began as a minute trickle in the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, when they were already well underway or even inching toward an end in parts of Western Europe. Peaking in the second half of the seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth centuries, Russian and Ukrainian trials abated only during the 1770s but did not cease altogether until the mid-nineteenth century. Witchcraft was energetically prosecuted in Russia and Ukraine after the entire notion of magic had fallen into disrepute (or even become laughable) among most members of the educated classes in Western areas. In the Dutch Republic, for instance, the last executions of witches took place in 1613 (when sixty-four people were burned to death) and in England in 1682. In New England, famously, the hangings came to an abrupt halt with the collapse of the trials in Salem in 1692, although in each of these areas a few nonlethal trials occurred after the last death penalty had been applied. English courts continued to hear witchcraft cases until 1715, though none of these later prosecutions resulted in execution.

In other words, witchcraft came to preoccupy Russian and Ukrainian courts later and remained a serious crime in these East Slavic regions well after the trials were over in most of Western Europe, but their somewhat

delayed schedule was not exceptional at all if we take a more inclusive look at witchcraft persecution across all of Europe.

Western European countries were among the first to put an end to witch trials, but their tempo was not the norm. Other parts of Europe matched step with the chronology of trials in our region. In many areas of Europe, trials continued well into the eighteenth century, just as they did in Russia and Ukrainian regions. In the German lands and areas of Eastern and Southeastern Europe, trials and burnings continued into the 1770s. In Hungary, the prosecution of witches wound down following a series of decrees by Empress Maria Teresa in 1755 and 1756, although it took some time for the trials to reach a definitive end. The final execution of a witch occurred there in 1777. A stronger law issued in Vienna a decade later prohibited the prosecution of witches altogether. Poland passed a similar measure in 1775. Historians generally cite the beheading of Anna Göldi in Switzerland in 1782 as the last legal execution for witchcraft in Europe, although there may be later contenders that have yet to be identified. In any case, the Swiss example places Russia ahead of the curve for ending this cruel practice. Russia's Empress Elizabeth abolished the death penalty in a series of decrees beginning in 1744, just after the last known execution for witchcraft had taken place. Unfortunately, even as she ended the use of capital punishment, Elizabeth simultaneously increased her persecution of witchcraft as a serious crime. Elizabeth's successor, Catherine the Great, furthered the slow process of decriminalizing witchcraft by redefining it as a crime deriving from ignorance, superstition, and fraud, and therefore warranting less severe penalties than the law formally prescribed. In spite of all of these efforts to decrease witchcraft prosecution, various lower courts continued to hear cases until the late 1860s, several decades after the very last trials in places such as Bavaria (1792), Portugal (1802), Württemberg (1805), and Spain (1820).[4]

At no time, even at their height, were there massive witch hunts or mass executions in the Russian and Ukrainian lands. Courts in these areas exercised far more restraint in their prosecution of witchcraft than did the witch-hunters in many other parts of Europe. As in other regions, Russian

and Ukrainian judicial procedures could be cruel and unfair, the outcomes predetermined, and the application of torture merciless. Yet in neither of these East Slavic regions did accusations snowball the way they did in the major panics in the Germanic lands, which could claim hundreds of lives before they burned themselves out.

Some of this divergence may be attributed to the differences between the Orthodox churches that dominated in Russia and in parts of Ukraine and the Catholic and Protestant denominations that held sway in most of Europe. The Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox churches did not mount Inquisition-like hunts for heretics, even when they were shaken by major schisms in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In Catholic Europe, as early as the thirteenth century, churchmen and theologians began to associate witchcraft with heresy, and by the fifteenth century, that identification took on the weight of official doctrine and common knowledge. As heretics, witches were understood to derive their uncanny power from the devil himself, at the price of their souls and of swearing allegiance to the forces of darkness. Viewed through this theological framework, which came to be shared by Catholic and Protestants alike, witches appeared far more dangerous to faith and realm than practitioners of simple practical magic. Individuals who practiced everyday magic with incantations, potions, or manipulation of plants and everyday objects might threaten people and property and teach others to follow suit, but when they came to be understood as heretics in the service of Satan, the threat amplified beyond all bounds. The devil's minions, after all, were sworn to upend the entire divine and earthly order and so had to be eradicated at any cost.

This terrifying vision of heretical witches massing in satanic conspiracy never took root in the East Slavic Orthodox imagination. The devil and his demons figured prominently in Orthodox understanding of sin and appeared in Last Judgment icons and frescoes, but this was not a devil with the frightening unitary power that Catholic and Protestant theologians ascribed to him. Furthermore, his agency remained only distantly related to witchcraft. Although the label of "heretic" did occasionally cling to those

accused of witchcraft, it was a more prosaic magic involving salt, roots, herbs, water, wax, and spells that preoccupied Russians and Ukrainians at all levels of the social hierarchy. This variant was not altogether harmless, however. It could prove terrifying in its own way. If everyday magic of healing and fortunetelling could provide solace and aid to people in times of illness or distress—or help them achieve prosperity, fertility, and love—it could also pose dangers. The same individuals claiming to command mysterious healing powers might also wield the power to curse or to kill. At times such quotidian magic, even without a developed satanic or heretical overlay, could have serious social and political ramifications, particularly if directed at elites or disrupting communities. Prosaic magic was also ubiquitous in Western Europe, but it became transformed by an overlay of scholarly theory that understood witchcraft to be a Satanic conspiracy, "hell-bent on overturning earthly and divine authority and subjecting the world to the tyranny of the Antichrist." That theory in turn promoted witch hunting. In contrast, Russian witchcraft remained prosaic and its prosecution small-scale.[5]

The absence of the satanic pact and collaboration with the devil as central tenets of Orthodox witchcraft belief helps explain the relative paucity of trials. The witches' covens, sabbaths, and orgies with the devil that preoccupied Western demonologists did not figure at all in either of these East Slavic group's popular lore or religious writings, let alone in the witchcraft trials. Suspects were not subject to the demeaning bodily searches for the devil's mark or for unnatural "teats," at which, according to European belief, witches' demon-familiars suckled. These physical marks of contact with the devil simply did not enter the Orthodox imaginary. Satanic pacts figured little in Russian and Ukrainian witch trials even after Peter the Great belatedly imported the idea of demonic sorcery and entrenched it in the law in the early eighteenth century.

In Russia, between 1600 and the mid-1770s, during the heyday of persecution, surviving records document between 450 and 500 trials, involving perhaps 900 people, a tiny figure in the vast Russian Empire. Trials most commonly involved a single practitioner of magic, sometimes

two, and only rarely seven, ten, or at the outside twelve suspects. Not all witchcraft trial records report the sentences imposed, but for those where we can document the outcome, approximately 15 percent led to execution, while the rest of the accused were exiled, released under strictures of surveillance by their neighbors, found innocent, or in some other way disappeared from the records. In the Ukrainian lands of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russian Empire, a mere 5 percent of the 223 individuals accused of witchcraft were given death sentences.[6]

Even with these relatively small numbers there is no diminishing the cost in lives exacted by the trials. Still, the execution rates, as well as the overall numbers of trials, were decidedly low relative to European totals. The numbers and percentages give evidence of less intense witch hunting and less bloody sentencing regimes but not of less engagement with magic. Until the late eighteenth century, all levels of Russian society believed in the efficacy of magic. People of all ranks, from the tsars themselves to their humblest slaves, resorted to magic to help them out of difficulties, and by the same token, all kinds of people feared that ill-wishers might deploy magic against them. The participation of educated elites in this economy of witchcraft is most strikingly evident in some of our eighteenth-century cases, when members of the westernized, educated, "enlightened" nobles sought out witches to cast spells on their behalf. The nineteenth century brought a sharp decline in belief among the educated classes, but magic continued to play an important role in the lives and cultures of ordinary people throughout the empire, regardless of ethnicity or religion. In this collection, however, we focus on areas where Orthodox Christians predominated, and where most of the trials took place. Only occasionally do references to non-Orthodox practitioners appear in our documents.

Russian witch trials, as we have seen, roughly followed the chronology of the rest of Europe, but they broke the general mold in two important ways. The first, already addressed above, had to do with the almost complete absence of the tropes of the satanic pact or service to the devil, an anomaly that the Russians shared with Orthodox Ukrainians. The second arena of divergence, which we consider here, was the exceptional gender profile of

the accused.[7] Throughout the early modern era, the overwhelming majority of those accused and convicted of witchcraft or sorcery in Russia were *men*. This finding stands in stark contrast with Catholic and Protestant Europe and Colonial North America, from New England to Poland, where roughly 80 percent of those charged with witchcraft were women. This overall statistic holds up across Europe despite areas of exception where men vastly outnumbered women among the accused—such as Normandy (75 percent) or Iceland (90 percent)—or regions such as Finland, Lithuania, and Estonia or the jurisdiction of the parlement of Paris, where accusations fell more equally.[8] Russian courts consistently prosecuted men over women: 75 to 80 percent of the accused were men, precisely the reverse of European norms. Underscoring their deep cultural linkages to the Latinate traditions of Poland and the rest of Europe, the Ukrainian regions followed the dominant European pattern rather than the Russian one. In Ukrainian lands both before and after incorporation into the Russian Empire, the majority of accused, just under 80 percent, were women.[9]

At our present moment, when awareness of the fluidity of gender identities and even of biological binaries has forced fundamental rethinking of conventional approaches, one might wonder whether these categories are useful ones at all. Certainly, the historical actors we examine here thought they were important ways of understanding and assigning identities. Moreover, in Catholic and Protestant countries, though less so in the East Slavic lands of our study, the alluring topic of witchcraft inspired thinkers to ponder the nature of gender and sex, to advance theories about the deficits supposedly natural to women's essential makeup, and to explain women's organic proclivity to evil. A zone of fantasy, desire, and anxiety, the topic invited people of all kinds to articulate their ideas about gender, in terms of both presumptive norms and possibilities of transgression.[10] Therefore, from its earliest manifestations through its later cultural adaptations, our subject matter lends itself to thinking with and across gender binaries. Early modern Russian and Ukrainian populations advanced fewer general musings on the gendered character of witchcraft, but in their actions they demonstrated particular patterns of accusation. The skew against men in the

Russian lands and against women in the Ukrainian territories discloses powerful underlying, unstated presumptions about who might be a likely witch in each of these closely related but historically distinct cultures. Identifying the specific conceptual linkages between witchcraft and gender allows us to think with these categories alongside the people of the past.

When confronted with the peculiar majority of men in Russian witch trials, people often ask, "Why did they accuse men and not women?" Such a question presumes that it is somehow natural to suspect women of this particular crime. In fact, however, the question could equally well be reversed: Why did early modern Europeans associate women with witchcraft? And why do we continue to do so today? Throughout history men too have practiced magic and sorcery, and yet it was women who bore the stigma of the charge and the brunt of the trials. The European norm requires as much explanation as the Russian inversion.

Much of the research on witch trials in recent decades has grappled with understanding the causes of the concerted, vicious, and deadly assault on women that convulsed so much of Europe during the witch craze. Scholars point to a wide range of explanatory factors, ranging from professional competition between male physicians and female healers to psychological processes of infant development that leave a residual rage against the mother. Early modern medicine with its theory of humors attributed characteristics to a woman's body that made it more susceptible to penetration by evil forces, and this view resonated with theological precepts that viewed women, daughters of Eve, as weak in mind and spirit, easily corrupted by the devil. The historian Walter Stephens posits that the bodily contact imagined between women and their demon lovers gave their male interrogators reassurance that the sphere of the spirit—both demonic and divine—could still touch the earthly realm in an age of increasing skepticism. Women's testimony to their corporeal contact with devils, Stephens argues, gave spiritual comfort to their anxious interrogators, who conveniently ignored the fact that the testimony was taken under torture.[11] Other scholars emphasize the weight of disadvantage that tipped the scales against women. Their structurally weak legal and economic positions in

early modern societies set them at risk for incurring charges, and their inability to command the language of the law, rhetoric, or Latin made them unable to defend themselves once they ended up in court.[12] The strictures placed on women's behavior further predetermined the association between women and witchcraft. Folklore about wicked witches cemented the stereotypic identification of witches as women, as, in circular fashion, did the evidence of real-life confessions and executions. The literature on this topic is vast, so here we can only list a few of the many suggested explanations.

So we can flip the question back on the questioner and ask why the West decided that witches should necessarily be women. But that leaves hanging the original puzzle: Why did Russia follow a different pattern? Here three major differences seem important. First, Russian Orthodoxy did not develop the same kind of academic discipline of theological disputation and debate, and so there was no equivalent of the demonological literature that developed in the Roman Catholic West. The infamous *Malleus maleficarum*, *The Hammer of Witches*, first published in 1486, which defined witchcraft and established practical guidelines for its prosecution, and other such writings had no influence whatsoever in the Orthodox East. The latter remained tied to older magical traditions that were part of ancient Christianity and post-1054 modifications of Byzantine Orthodoxy. In their treatises from the late fifteenth century onward Roman Catholic and later Protestant churchmen and scholars determined that the unnatural wonders effected by magic could be explained only by the involvement of the devil. Without his assistance, they reasoned, how would bleary-eyed old beggar women manage to see the future or levitate or cause people to fall in love against their better judgment? They posited that such women, discontented with their status, envious of their superiors and betters, would conclude pacts with the devil. They would sell their souls in return for wealth, sex, beauty, power, or vengeance.

In Russian and Ukrainian scenarios, quite differently, witchcraft was only loosely associated with the devil. No Orthodox theologian sat around worrying about a mechanism to explain how an incantation recited over

melting wax could heal a sick child or how tucking a snakeskin in one's armpit could help win one's case in court. These marvels were just taken as givens. Spells were occasionally addressed to Satan and sometimes to minor demons—sometimes with creative names and characteristics, some playful, some not—but their agency was not considered necessary. The forces of nature, the urgency of emotion, or the alliterative power of poetry could equally fuel magic. Incantations often contained snippets of prayers or invoked saintly protectors, and such spells might also be condemned as criminal magic. Theoretical questions about mechanisms of magic simply did not arouse much discussion in Russia. Clerics and judges as well as practitioners and their clients accepted the fact that witches' magic could be effective without the aid of Satan.[13] Even the demonic possession ascribed to witchcraft sidestepped the role of the devil in favor of lesser demons. In a major departure from the European witchcraft script, even charges of summoning unclean spirits remained largely free of allegations of diabolical associations or of satanic allegiance.

Just as Russian and Ukrainian witch lore remained aloof from Western demonological conceptions in the early modern period, these regions were also little affected by the learned misogyny that fed into the European identification of women as witches. It was once again the works of Western scholars and theologians that fine-tuned and popularized the notion of the perfidious witch as female and attributed particular traits to her. Among these putative traits, dreamed up by an educated male clergy, was an aggressive, insatiable lust, a drive so powerful that women would turn to Satan himself or his demons to satisfy it. In Europe, this linkage between witchcraft and sex, in a context where female sexuality was considered troublesome and disruptive under the best of circumstances, reinforced the presupposition that women were particularly prone to satanic seduction. Neither Russia nor Ukraine seemed much interested in this specific storyline. Although magic was used to gain sexual favors or to cure or cause sexual dysfunction in both of these societies, there was little speculation about sexual relations with demons and no move at all to connect such supernatural intercourse with witchcraft. It is important to note here that

Orthodox priests—though not monks—were allowed to marry, and the presumed moral superiority of celibacy over sexual activity was somewhat less developed than in Catholic thought. Russian witchcraft belief remained far less sexualized and less the purview of a particular gender. In the early modern and modern penitential examples that we include in the volume, we purposely selected some detailed questions that Russian Orthodox clerics asked adults about their sexual acts in order to place the nonsexualized nature of the questions the same clergymen asked about witchcraft and sorcery in better context. Their most frequent query about magic had to do with whether penitents had sought the help of sorcerers and brought them to their homes to make potions and cast their spells.

Magic in Russia was understood as a tool that anyone might use, and men, who were able to live more mobile lives than women, seemed to get caught using such tools more frequently. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, men enjoyed greater opportunities to become literate, and literacy in its own way produced material evidence that landed men in the courtroom: the written books and spells they carried around with them served as damning testimony against them. As in Western Europe, it was not unusual for male clerics to be accused of witchcraft on the basis of suspicious books of magic or spells in their own handwriting.

Ukraine, however, still poses a puzzle. Until the nineteenth century, when Nikolai Gogol and other authors would brilliantly rework the folkloric tradition, Ukrainian lore too remained mostly untouched by the notions of sexualized and demonic witchcraft. It was deeply shaped by the precepts of Orthodox Christianity, just as Russia was. And yet Ukraine's pattern of accusations matched that of the rest of Europe, with men constituting only 20 percent of the accused, while Russians targeted men in inverse proportion. This is a hard conundrum to resolve. Although causal arguments are hard to prove, it was presumably the Catholic and Protestant influences and centuries of close contact with Poland and Lithuania that brought Ukraine into line with the rest of Europe in terms of the gender distribution of the accused. Ukraine participated more actively than Russia in the theological considerations that produced Western witch lore, and, as

evident in the legal texts below, was influenced by Polish demonological literature and legal traditions.

In the mid-nineteenth century, the educated governing classes in the Russian Empire (which had by then absorbed most of the Ukrainian lands) lost interest in prosecuting magic, now deeming it a harmless superstition rather than a crime. As the state withdrew formal legal recourse in matters of witchcraft, peasants continued to believe in the phenomenon. Magic remained alive and well, both practiced and feared by the general population, but the contours of their beliefs remained dynamic, leading to significant alterations. Notably, in witchcraft lore and in the very rare episodes of extralegal vigilante justice against a suspected witch, the gender profile shifted. While male sorcerers continued to exercise power in village communities and male healers and "cunning men" remained common, witchcraft per se came to be increasingly identified with women. Both among members of the Russian elite—interested in folklore and national mythology—and among Russian and Ukrainian commoners, the figure of the witch metamorphosed and stabilized in the image of the fairytale witch Baba Yaga, who flies in a mortar steered by a pestle and who lives in the forest in a hut on chicken legs.

Figure 1: Ivan Iakovlevich Bilibin, "Baba Yaga," illustration for the fairy tale "Vasilisa the Beautiful," 1900. Public domain. Wikimedia Commons.

The interplay between Ukrainian and Russian examples in this collection helps pinpoint where similarities and differences in witchcraft persecution and in the contours of prosaic magic lie. Their histories are entangled, and in terms of witchcraft, as in all other matters, those entanglements can be interesting and revealing. These two post-Soviet states each claim the legacy of a single medieval Rus culture that from the late tenth century onward was profoundly shaped by the Orthodox Christianity imported from Byzantium. In their competing claims, however, Russian and Ukrainian national histories advance different understandings of the ethnic identity of the peoples who created that original culture and of their legacies. We find persuasive the recent argument posited by Serhii Plokhy that multiple identities existed in Rus, none of which evolved seamlessly into one or another of the modern East Slavic nations.[14] Our first entries in this volume pertain to the early period of Rus, in recognition of the significant impact that Rus culture and law had on shaping both early modern and modern Ukrainian and Russian cultures.

With the collapse of the Kyivan Rus state by the mid-thirteenth century, as a result of the Mongol invasions, any earlier unity shattered. The various principalities of Rus came under very different political and cultural influences as territories became divided among three major principalities: Halych-Volhynia in the southwest, Novgorod in the north, and Vladimir-Suzdal in the northeast, all of which paid obeisance to the Mongol Golden Horde. In the first half of the fourteenth century, Lithuania, Poland, and Hungary competed for control over the southwestern lands, the regions that would later come to constitute Ukraine. The Lithuanians emerged victorious in mid-century, taking control of all southern Rus principalities except Halych (also known as Galicia). Then in 1569, the Ukrainian territories that we consider in this collection, passed from Lithuania to the jurisdiction of the Catholic Kingdom of Poland as part of a negotiated deal uniting the two realms into the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Hence, although most of the Ukrainian population remained Orthodox, they were exposed to Catholic influences and European demonological witch lore in ways that Russia was not. In 1596, the Union of Brest formed the Uniate

Church, which allowed Byzantine Orthodox rites in exchange for acknowledgment of the primacy of the pope in Rome. After this date, the Ukrainian religious situation grew more complex. Some of the population and clergy accepted this union with the Holy See, while others did not, preferring to maintain loyalty to Orthodoxy and the authority of the patriarchate of Constantinople.

Ruled by one power (Lithuania), transferred to another (Poland), incorporated in successive stages by a third (Russia), subject to a layered set of laws and legal traditions, populated by a mixed population practicing a jumble of faiths and speaking a babel of languages, Ukraine brought together Eastern and Western religious and cultural traditions in a dynamic amalgam. Its solutions to problems of magic and witchcraft proved both like and unlike its Russian and Polish neighbors and sometimes overlords. This complex skein demonstrates that it is not possible to isolate one of these histories from the other in any neat fashion. With such ebbs and flows of connection and separation, the two witchcraft cultures offer a single, rich history of belief and prosecution.

The documents in this collection allow access to a wealth of materials never before accessible in English and, for that matter, never assembled or published together in any language. Some of the documents have appeared in print in their original languages individually or in particular topical collections, such as V. Antonovych's 1877 compendium of Ukrainian witchcraft trials and N. Ia. Novombergskii's 1906 collection of seventeenth-century Russian cases. Others have been quoted in fragments in academic studies, and a few have been translated earlier. A significant number of the entries come from archival documents never before published.

Because the possibilities are so open-ended, we have chosen to concentrate on the persecution and prosecution of suspected witches within the predominantly Orthodox regions of Ukraine and Russia. To this end, we have gathered legal and judicial records, as well as descriptions of legal and extralegal administration of justice from across the nine hundred years represented in this volume. In doing so, we present new information about the workings and evolution of the legal systems, the interplay and tensions

between church and state, and a rich panorama of the contours of everyday life. Our decision to focus on justice inevitably forced us to omit marvelous documents, particularly more literary accounts such as saints' lives and miracle tales, biography and autobiography, and works of poetry and fiction. With a few exceptions, ethnographic accounts and newspaper reports have also gone by the wayside. We leave these documents out reluctantly, because such sources provide a richness and texture sometimes less evident in judicial records. But the court records themselves convey a vivid sense of the lives and struggles of the people involved—their quests for love, respect, good marriages, and good health, as well as vengeance, sexual gratification, and profit—and of the intensity and variety of their magical beliefs, fears, and practices. As exemplified in the beautiful spell reproduced in our epigram, the incantations and rituals preserved in the texts allow us to see into cultures steeped in lyrical imagery, in which magic was thought to function through the power of analogy (as this, so that) and by the agency of mythical, divine, or demonic figures (Herod's daughters, the Mother of God, or "my father Satan"), or by the force of embodied emotion ("You, Woe"). Magic interleaved the mundane and the extraordinary, just as it drew eclectically on the grab bag of forces and intercessors just mentioned. Where magic was employed, or where it was suspected and feared, we can see the dynamics of social hierarchy in action.

The particulars of the kinds and forms of magic employed, the formulas used in the spells and rituals, and the problems that drove people to employ the services of witches or sorcerers remained remarkably constant over the hundreds of years covered here, although with some notable distinctions between the Ukrainian and the Russian examples. While the magic itself changed little over the centuries, the legal and cultural framework changed dramatically, which meant that cases were heard in very different institutional settings and the testimony was understood in radically different ways by the elite judges at different times in history. In the early centuries, little existed in the way of formal regulation of witchcraft, although a general mistrust of the entire enterprise entered East Slavic legal thought together with Orthodox Christianity. Medieval and early modern

legislation, such as there is, expresses marked uncertainty about the specific danger posed by witchcraft: was it a form of physical crime that threatened the bodies and livelihoods of innocent people, or was it a spiritual crime that endangered Christian souls? Not surprisingly, the sources document a shift away from belief in witchcraft among governing elites and judges in the highest courts during the latter part of the eighteenth century, but that shift comes slowly, in fits and starts. Documents from the first half of the nineteenth century allow us to follow witchcraft belief into the period after witchcraft had been demoted from prosecution in the higher courts to those at the provincial level. Although educated elites by and large disdained such superstitions, belief in magic and its efficacy continued to circulate, occasionally with dire outcomes. In the second half of the century, witchcraft and its antithetical partner, possession or "shrieking," attracted the attention of philosophers and theologians, ethnographers, physicians, and novelists and became a site of fruitful speculation about the essence of Russia itself and of the peasants who came to embody it in the intellectual imagination.[15] Those currents of thought, however, lie beyond the scope of this collection.

For each chapter we have provided a general introduction as well as specific introductions for each of the documents. We are pleased to say that the commentary throughout not only elucidates facts and contexts but also introduces novel approaches and new interpretations. Because these commentaries are placed strategically throughout the book, we are able to keep this overall introduction brief. As we worked through all of these primary documents and translated them, we realized just how ubiquitous magic and witchcraft were in the political, religious, and social cultures of the Orthodox East. This came as a surprise to us, even though we have each studied and written extensively about witchcraft in this region for decades. We hope that our readers will find the explanatory introductions helpful in explaining the quirks of the cultures that produced these documents and will offer adequate context for them.

We do not devote a separate chapter to the topic of torture, because its grim imprint ineluctably distorts the history of witchcraft prosecution at

every turn, at least through the late eighteenth century. Any attempt to wall it off from the rest of the documents would misrepresent reality and shield us from the coercive force of its self-fulfilling logic. Whether implicitly or explicitly, it undergirded the proceedings in many of the trials presented in the collection. The documents urgently demand that the reader confront the effects of torture on victims and witnesses. They challenge us to attempt to understand the moral underpinnings of legal systems that relied on such a cruel means of interrogation and the varieties of "truth" it extracted.

The documents do not fall cleanly into the thematic divisions we have imposed on them. Each one could fit equally well under multiple rubrics. Along the way, we have cross-referenced other relevant themes and documents, but surely readers will find other connections and different topical motifs running through the collection. May the exercise be productive and generative of new insights into this endlessly interesting topic!

PART I

HISTORICAL EVOLUTION, LAW, AND PROSECUTION

Chapter 1

EARLY ACCOUNTS OF WITCHCRAFT, SORCERY, AND MAGIC IN MEDIEVAL RUS

"Rus" is the name given to the lands of the Eastern Slavs in the medieval accounts of the region that now comprises Ukraine, Belarus, and European Russia—that is, roughly the area covered by the documents included in this book. Chapter 1 of this book presents some of the very few surviving accounts of magic, sorcery, or witchcraft from the medieval period, here defined as the years between the ninth and fourteenth centuries. This chapter is necessarily brief, because few sources survive to document these early centuries at all, and fewer still contain material relevant to the topic at hand.

Conventionally, the narrative history of Rus begins in the eighth or ninth century, when diverse Slavic, Baltic, Finnic, Turkic, and Scandinavian people settled the region. Archaeology can tell us a great deal, but we have only limited numbers of textual sources to supplement the archaeologists' findings. Along with some Arabic accounts, Scandinavian runic inscriptions, occasional mentions in European documents, and a few Byzantine Greek records, the main textual sources on Rus are historical

chronicles written by Rus churchmen beginning in the late eleventh century. Accounts of the earliest centuries are retrospective reconstructions, written long after the events they describe. The chronicle entries are at times schematic: such and such a prince died, or such and such a river flooded. Elsewhere the chronicles' year-by-year listings are enlivened with theological commentaries, folkloric elements, or gripping stories. When they reported on events in their own times, the authors had more to go on but nonetheless continued to inflect their accounts with their own cultural expectations and morality, as all writers must do.

In 862, according to the chronicle tale, the various tribes collectively invited the Rus, a group of Scandinavian Varangians (as Vikings were called when they headed eastward) to come and rule over them. These Rus gave their name to the land and people they came to rule, and they spawned a princely dynasty, the Riurikovichi. Descendants of the Riurikovich line continued to rule the Rus lands as princes, grand princes, and, eventually, tsars until the line died out in 1598, and a new dynasty, the Romanovs, succeeded them.

The excerpts that follow may tell us about actual historical events, or they may tell us more about how their authors thought about their history and their present. In either case, they are good stories, and they tell us how these medieval authors thought about magic and sorcery, and about how those practices interacted with other issues of concern: with the paganism that remained active long after the formal conversion of Rus; with teachings about the devil and his wiles; with ideas about men and women and their respective characteristics and proclivities toward sorcery.

1.1 PAGAN SOOTHSAYERS AND MAGICIANS IN THE PRIMARY CHRONICLE

Sources: Primary Chronicle excerpts and translations are adapted from Samuel Hazzard Cross and Olgerd P. Shobowitz-Wetzor, trans. and ed., *Russian Primary Chronicle: Laurentian Text* (Cambridge: Mediaeval Academy of America, 1953), 69–71, 134–35, 150–54. Public Domain.

Few written records survive from the earliest centuries of Ukrainian and Russian history, the era of medieval Rus. This was a period before nations as we know them had taken shape. Polities were hazy and informal, built around warlords and their military retinues. *The Primary Chronicle*, or *Tale of Bygone Years*, is the main source on the early centuries. Its history starts with the division of lands and peoples among the sons of Noah after the biblical Flood, and it recounts the history of the Rus in annalistic fashion—that is, year by year—up to the year 1116. Its historical content combines legend and religious commentary with more straightforward records of wars, reigns, and decrees.

Magic and magicians crop up not infrequently in the pages of the chronicle. These passages are lively and interesting in many respects. Written by churchmen long after the episodes they describe, these sections reveal ambivalence regarding vestiges of pre-Christian paganism in a recently converted land. (Rus was ostensibly converted en masse by order of Grand Prince Vladimir in 988, but actual conversion was a long, extended process.) Also noteworthy in these passages are the occasional notes of skepticism about the power of magicians. Many modern readers find this kind of early medieval skepticism surprising, but here the Rus shared a position widely adopted in the Christian West at the time as well. Christian leaders of the period known as the "Dark Ages" generally dismissed magic as superstition and those who claimed to practice it as charlatans. They condemned those who believed in it as succumbing to false belief and delusion, although they assumed that such believers were led astray by the devil. Such skepticism about the reality of magic may explain a vein of dark humor that runs through these accounts. A far harsher assessment of witches and a deeper belief in their power emerged later in European history.

Another theme to consider while reading these passages is the representation of men's and women's involvement in acts of magic. Note that all of the magicians described here are men and their victims for the most part are women, yet the chronicler reminds his readers of Eve's responsibility for man's fall and connects that story to a more general female proclivity toward witchcraft.

Dates are presented in two formats, using the chroniclers' dating system and our own. The chronicle dates events from the Creation of the World, which Byzantine scholars calculated through complex numerological manipulation as having occurred 5,508 years before the birth of Christ. Thus this first passage is marked in the chronicle as happening in the year 6420, which translates into 912 CE in our calendrical system.

Oleg and the soothsayers

This description of the death of the pre-Christian Prince Oleg has the feel of myth or folklore. It is noteworthy that although he was writing about a pagan prince and his wonder-working magicians, the clerical author interjects no words of judgment or condemnation of their sorcery. He underscores the irony of fate but withholds comment on the apparently genuine power of the soothsayer-magicians. The interplay between sorcery and fate is a recurrent theme in literature. Famously, Shakespeare explores this same tension in *Macbeth*, where he leaves open the question of whether the witches' predictions or Macbeth's own actions control his destiny.

(6420) 912 CE

Now autumn came, and Oleg (*the prince of Kiev*) thought about his horse, which he had caused to be well fed, yet had never mounted. For on one occasion he had made inquiry of the wonder-working magicians as to the ultimate cause of his death. One magician replied, "Oh Prince, it is from the steed which you love and on which you ride that you shall meet your death." Oleg then reflected and determined never to mount this horse or even to look upon it again. So he gave command that the horse should be properly fed, but never led into his presence. He thus let several years pass until after he had attacked the Greeks. After he returned to Kiev, four years elapsed, but in the fifth he thought of the horse through which the magicians had foretold that he should meet his death. He thus summoned his senior squire and inquired as to the whereabouts of the horse which he had ordered to be fed and well cared for. The squire answered that he was dead. Oleg laughed and mocked the magician, exclaiming, "Soothsayers tell untruths, and their words are naught but falsehood. This horse is dead, but I am still alive."

Then he commanded that a horse should be saddled. "Let me see his bones," said he. He rode to the place where the bare bones and skull lay. Dismounting from his horse, he laughed and remarked, "So I was supposed to receive my death from this skull?" And he stamped upon the skull with his foot. But a serpent crawled forth from it and bit him in the foot, so that in consequence he sickened and died….

What shall we say of those who perform works of magic? … All these things exist through the sufferance of God and the agency of the devil, that by such means our orthodox faith may be tested as to whether it is firm and

secure, cleaving to the Lord and not to be seduced by the Enemy, through false miracles and satanic acts performed by the servants and slaves of his wickedness…. For the Lord often gives grace to the unworthy that it may benefit others.

Satanic inspiration and devil worship: Magicians in Suzdal

This second excerpt from the chronicle describes an episode that took place in 1024, over a century after the first one. In the interim, the people of Rus had nominally adopted Orthodox Christianity, by order of the grand prince. However, pre-Christian practices retained a strong hold among the population. The "magicians" in this passage may or may not have been practicing pagans, but that seems to be the implication of the author's editorial comments about their adherence to the devil. Devil worship and pagan practice are often undifferentiated in these early Christian texts. It is interesting that in this passage, the "magicians" accuse "old people" of somehow causing the harvest to fail–that is, of exercising malevolent force themselves.

(6532) 1024 CE

In this year, magicians appeared in Suzdal, and killed old people by satanic inspiration and devil worship, saying that they would spoil the harvest. There was great confusion and famine throughout all that country. The whole population went along the Volga to the Bulgars from whom they bought grain and thus sustained themselves.

When (*Grand Prince*) Yaroslav heard of the magicians, he went to Suzdal. He there seized upon the magicians and dispersed them, but punished some, saying, "In proportion to its sin, God inflicts upon every land hunger, pestilence, drought, or some other chastisement, and man has no understanding thereof."

Shamans, devils, and skeptics: Rus princes in the Novgorod lands

This long passage from the chronicle describes a series of magical encounters that took place half a century after the previous one. The magician-prophet in the first paragraph utters apocalyptic predictions about geographic upheavals. The same prophesies, in more or less the same form, would circulate in the Rus lands into the early modern period. The subsequent accounts of magicians working their mischief along the Volga

River are packed full of information about the interactions of various ethnic groups in the region, of pagans and Christians, and of populations with their princes. The stories also gave the chronicler an opportunity to reflect on the role of the devil in human lives and to spin out a marvelous alternative creation myth, which he attributes to one of the magicians. In its idiosyncrasy, this variant on the biblical creation tale is reminiscent of the sixteenth-century Italian miller Menocchio's radical cosmology, described by the historian Carlo Ginzburg.[1] This is not your standard Adam and Eve story! We cannot take the chronicler's version as an objective transmission of indigenous belief but instead as a reflection of what beliefs he attributed to the magicians. As in the previous entry, we see the evil magicians here blaming local inhabitants—in this case, women—of working their own destructive magic, and therefore deserving to die.

(6579) 1071 CE

At this time, a magician appeared inspired by the devil. He came to Kiev and informed the inhabitants that after the lapse of five years the Dnieper would flow backward, and that the various countries would change their locations, so that Greece would be where Rus was, and Rus where Greece was, and that other lands would be similarly dislocated. The ignorant believed him, but the faithful ridiculed him and told him that the devil was only deluding him to his ruin. This was actually the case, for in the course of one night he disappeared altogether. For the devils, after once encouraging a man, lead him to an evil fate, then scorn him with their laughter, and cast him into the fatal abyss after they have inspired his words. In this connection we may discuss infernal incitation and its effects.

While there was famine on one occasion in the district of Rostov, two magicians appeared from Yaroslavl and said they knew who interfered with the food supply. Then they went along the Volga, and where they came to a trading-post, they designated the handsomest women, saying that one affected the grain, another the honey, another the fish, and another the furs. The inhabitants brought into their presence their sisters, their mothers, and their wives, and the magicians in their delusion stabbed them in the back and drew out from their bodies grain or fish. They thus killed many women and appropriated their property. Then they arrived at Beloozero (*a settlement in the north*, and about three hundred men accompanied them. At that moment it happened that Yan, son of Vÿshata, arrived in the neighborhood to collect tribute on behalf of Svyatoslav. The people of

Beloozero recounted to him how two magicians had caused the death of many women along the Volga and the Sheksna and had now arrived in their district. Yan inquired whose subjects they were, and upon learning that they belonged to his Prince, he directed their followers to surrender the magicians to him, since they were subjects of his own Prince. When they refused to obey his command, Yan wanted to go unarmed in search of the magicians, but his companions warned him against such action, urging that the magicians might attack him. Yan thus bade his followers to arm themselves; there were twelve of them with him, and they went through the forest in pursuit of the magicians. The latter arranged their forces to offer resistance, and when Yan advanced with his battleaxe, three of their number approached Yan and said to him, "You advance to certain death; go no further." But Yan gave the order to strike them down, and then moved upon the rest. They gathered together to attack Yan, and one of them struck at him with his axe, but Yan turned the axe and struck him with the butt. Then he bade his followers cut them down, but the enemy fled into the forest after killing Yan's priest. Yan returned to the town and the people of Beloozero, and announced to them that if they did not surrender those magicians to him, he would remain among them for a year.

The people of Beloozero then went forth and captured the magicians, whom they brought into Yan's presence. He asked them why they had caused the death of so many persons. They replied, "Because they prevent plenty, and if we remove them, abundance will return. If you so desire, we shall extract from their bodies grain or fish or any other object in your presence." Yan declared, "Verily that is a lie. God made man out of earth; he is composed of bones and has veins for his blood. There is nothing else in him. He knows nothing, and it is God alone who possesses knowledge." The magicians then asserted that they knew how man was made. When Yan asked them how, they replied, "God washed himself in the bath, and after perspiring, dried himself with straw and threw it out of heaven upon the earth. Then Satan quarreled with God as to which of them should create man out of it. But the devil made man, and God set a soul in him. As a result, whenever a man dies, his body goes to the earth and his soul to God."

Yan then made answer, “It is indeed the devil who has put you to this mischief. In what do you believe?” They answered, “In Antichrist.” He then inquired of them where their god had his abode and they replied that he dwelt in the abyss.

Then Yan asked, “What sort of god is that which dwells in the abyss? That is a devil. God dwells in heaven, sitting upon his throne, glorified by the angels who stand before him in fear and dare not look upon him. He whom you call Antichrist was cast out from the number of these angels and expelled from heaven for his presumption. He dwells indeed in the abyss, as you say, and there abides until God shall come from heaven to seize this Antichrist, and bind him with bonds, and cast him out, when he shall have taken him captive with his minions and those who believe in him.

As for you, you shall endure torment both at my hands here and now, and also in the life after death.” The magicians retorted that their gods made known to them that Yan could do them no harm, but Yan answered that their gods were liars. They then asserted their right to stand before Svyatoslav, and that Yan had no jurisdiction over them. Yan, however, ordered that they should be beaten and have their beards torn out. When they had been thus beaten, and after their beards had been pulled out with pincers, Yan inquired of them what their gods were saying at the moment. They made answer, “That we should stand before Svyatoslav.” Yan then directed that they should be gagged and bound to the thwart. Thereupon he sent them on before him by boat, and himself followed after. The party halted at the mouth of the Sheksna, and Yan said to the magicians, “What do your gods now make known to you?” They replied, “Our gods tell us that we shall not escape you alive.” Yan remarked that the information supplied by their gods was entirely correct. They then urged that if he released them, it would bring him much advantage, but that if he destroyed them, he should suffer much trouble and evil. Yan retorted that if he let them go, he would be more likely to be punished by God.

Then Yan said to the boatmen, “Has any relative of any one of you been killed by these men?” One of them answered that his mother had thus been killed, while another mentioned his sister and another his relatives. So Yan

ordered them to avenge their kinsfolk. They then seized and killed the magicians, whom they hanged upon an oak tree. They thus deservedly suffered punishment at God's hand. After Yan had departed homeward, a bear came up the next night, gnawed them, and ate them up. Thus they perished through the instigation of the devil, prophesying to other people, but ignorant of their own destruction. For if they had really known the future, they would not have come to that place where they were destined to be taken captive. After being thus captured, why did they declare that they would not die, even while Yan contemplated killing them? But such is the nature of the instigation of devils; for devils do not perceive man's thought, though they often inspire thought in man without knowing his secrets. God alone knows the mind of man, but devils know nothing, for they are weak and evil to look upon.

We shall now proceed to discuss their appearance and their magic. At about the same time, it happened that a certain man from Novgorod went among the Chuds (*a Finnic tribe settled in the lands of northeastern Rus*), and approached a magician, desiring to have his fortune told. The latter, according to his custom, began to call devils into his abode. The man from Novgorod sat upon the threshold of that same house, while the magician lay there in a trance, and the devil took possession of him.[2] The magician then arose, and said to the man from Novgorod, "The gods dare not approach, since you wear a symbol of which they are afraid." The Novgorodian then bethought him of the cross he wore, and went and laid it outside the house. The magician then resumed his calling of the devils, and they shook him, and made known why the stranger had come. Then the Novgorodian inquired of the magician why the devils were afraid of the cross they wore. The magician made answer, "That is the token of God in heaven, of whom our gods are afraid." Then the man of Novgorod asked who his gods were and where they dwelt. The magician replied, "In the abysses; they are black of visage, winged and tailed, and they mount up under heaven obedient to your gods. For your angels dwell in heaven, and if any of your people die, they are carried up to heaven. But if any of ours pass away, they are carried down into the abyss to our gods." And so it is; for sinners abide in hell in the

expectation of eternal torment, while the righteous associate with the angels in the heavenly abode.

Such is the power and the beauty and the weakness of demons! In this way they lead men astray, commanding them to recount visions, appearing to those who are imperfect in faith, and exhibiting themselves to some in sleep and to others in dreams. Thus magic is performed through infernal instigation. Particularly through the agency of women are infernal enchantments brought to pass, for in the beginning the devil deceived woman, and she in turn deceived man. Thus even down to the present day women perform magic by black arts, poison, and other devilish deceits. Unbelievers are likewise led astray by demons.

Thus in ancient days, in the time of the Apostles, there lived Simon Magus, who through his magic caused dogs to speak like man, and changed his own aspect, appearing sometimes old, sometimes young, and sometimes he even changed one man to the semblance of another, accomplishing this transfiguration by his magic art. Jannes and Jambres (*the magicians who competed with Moses at the court of Pharaoh*) wrought marvels against Moses through enchantment, but eventually they had no power against him. Kynops (*a wizard who supposedly dominated the island of Patmos in the late first century CE*) also practiced devilish arts, such as walking upon the water; and he performed other prodigies, being misled by the devil to his own and others' destruction.

A magician likewise appeared in Novgorod during the princely tenure of Gleb.[3] He harangued the people, and by representing himself as a god he deceived many of them; in fact, he hoodwinked almost the entire city. For he claimed to know all things, and he blasphemed against the Christian faith, announcing that he would walk across the Volkhov River in the presence of the public. There was finally an uprising in the city, and all believed in him so implicitly that they went so far as to desire to murder their bishop. But the Bishop took his cross, and clad himself in his vestments, and stood forth saying, "Whosoever has faith in the magician, let him follow him, but whosoever is a loyal Christian, let him come to the Cross." So the people were divided into two factions, for Gleb and his

retainers took their stand beside the bishop, while the common people all followed the magician. Thus there was a great strife between them.

Then Gleb hid an axe under his garments, approached the magician, and inquired of him whether he knew what was to happen on the morrow or might even occur before evening. The magician replied that he was omniscient. Then Gleb inquired whether he even knew what was about to occur that very day. The magician answered that he himself should perform great miracles. But Gleb drew forth the axe and smote him, so that he fell dead, and the people dispersed. Thus the man who had sold himself to the devil perished body and soul.

1.2 "MAYBE, BUT GOD KNOWS": SORCERY IN THE NOVGORODIAN CHRONICLE (1227)

Sources: *The Chronicle of Novgorod, 1016–1471*, trans. Robert Michell and Nevill Forbes (1914, repr. [Hattiesburg, MS]: Academic International, 1970), 68–69; *Novgorodskaia pervaia letopis' starshego i mladshego izvodov* (Moscow-Leningrad: AN SSSR, 1950), 65.

The Chronicle of Novgorod offers a regional perspective on the early history of Rus. Written in the same annalistic format as the previous chronicle, it places the wealthy mercantile city of Novgorod at the heart of its account. This brief notation from the early thirteenth century echoes the kind of skepticism about magicians' power we have already encountered in the earlier chronicle descriptions.

(6735) 1227 CE

Prince Yaroslav[4] went with the men of Novgorod against the Yem people (*a Finnic group that lived in the territories claimed by Novgorod*); and ravaged the whole land and brought back countless plunder. And the same year they burnt four sorcerers. They thought they were practicing sorcery, but God knows, and they burned them in Yaroslav's court.

1.3 BISHOP SERAPION OF VLADIMIR CONDEMNS BELIEF IN WITCHCRAFT (1274)

Source: Translated in Russell Zguta, "The Ordeal by Water (Swimming of Witches) in the East Slavic World," *Slavic Review* 36, no. 2 (1977): 223. Brackets in the original.

Serapion had a distinguished career as long-serving archimandrite of the Caves Monastery in Kyiv, before he became bishop of Vladimir in 1274. He served for only a year in that office and died in 1275. Five of his sermons survive. His central concern was to try to make sense of the disaster of the Mongol invasion (1237–40) and conquest, which he explained as divine retribution for the sinfulness of the Rus people. In this excerpt from a late sermon, the bishop condemns his fellow Christians for their credulity and for clinging to what he calls "pagan traditions," including belief in witches. In other words, he denounces belief in witchcraft rather than the practice of magic itself.

This sermon appears to make the first mention in Rus sources of burning witches and of the practice of "swimming" witches. "Swimming"—actually, dunking—was used sporadically across Europe to test accused witches. Suspects, bound in various ways, were dropped into a body of water. If they sank, they were innocent, but if they floated, witnesses concluded that the natural element of water had rejected them, sure proof of their guilt. Burning did not become common practice in later witch trials in Muscovy or in Ukraine, even though it was considered an acceptable, legal form of execution in both areas. The custom of swimming witches was always considered extralegal in nature in the two regions, although it was very occasionally practiced by officials in Ukrainian and Polish areas. But all this lay far in the future when Serapion wrote his sermon in 1274.

And you still cling to pagan traditions; you believe in witchcraft and burn innocent people and bring down murder upon the earth and the city…. Out of what books or writings do you learn that famine on earth is brought about by witchcraft? If you believe these things then why do you burn [witches]? You pray to them and implore them and bring them gifts, as if they had dominion over the earth—permitting rain, bringing warmth, making the land fruitful. In the past three years there has been no harvest not only in Rus but among the Latins [of the West] as well. Are witches responsible for this? Can God not order his creation if he wants to punish us for our sins? … The laws of God command that there be many witnesses before a man is condemned to death. You make the water bear witness and

say: if she begins to sink, she is innocent; if she floats she is a witch. Is it not possible that the devil himself, seeing your weak faith, supported her so that she would not sink, thus contributing to your own perdition? For you prefer the testimony of an inanimate substance to that of a created human being.

1.4 ST. ALIMPII AND THE LEPER WHO CONSULTED MAGICIANS (KYIVAN *PATERICON*)

Source: Adapted excerpt from Discourse 34 in *The* Paterik *of the Kievan Caves Monastery*, trans. Muriel Heppell (Cambridge, MA: Distributed by Harvard University Press for the Harvard Ukrainian Research Institute, 1989), 194–95. Reprinted with permission. ©1989 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

The *Paterik* of the Caves Monastery located in the city of Kyiv, the first Orthodox monastery of the Kyivan Rus state, was a thirteenth-century compilation of saints' lives, which honored the founding fathers Feodosii and Antonii, as well as their disciples. The stories date from the mid-eleventh and twelfth centuries but were not recorded until the early thirteenth century. The translation by Muriel Heppell presented here is based on the 1462 edition.

The "caves" in the monastery's name refer to the cells and later tunnels that the early ascetic monks dug in the steep hill overlooking the Dnieper River. The holy men also built chapels underground. In the early modern period these caves became the catacombs of the monastic compound, housing the uncorrupted or well-preserved saintly remains of the medieval monks, often in open coffins, to be venerated by the faithful. Miracles at the gravesites were duly recorded as testaments to God's grace. The Caves Monastery attracted Orthodox pilgrims from far and wide.

In this passage, miraculous healing through saintly intervention is set in direct contrast to futile and iniquitous consultation with "magicians and physicians," an intriguing pairing. The miracle tale invites us to contemplate how magic and its risks and dangers were defined and understood by the authors.

A wealthy man from Kiev contracted leprosy. For a long time he was treated by magicians and physicians, and he sought help from men of other faiths, but without success; in fact he found that his condition was getting worse.

One of his friends persuaded him to go to the Caves Monastery and ask some of the fathers to pray for him. He was taken to the monastery, and the superior ordered him to be given some water to drink, through a sponge, from the well of the holy Feodosij. They wiped his head and face, and immediately he was so covered with pus because of his lack of faith that they all fled from him because of the stench.

He returned to his own house, weeping and lamenting. For many days he did not go out on account of the stench, and said to his friends, "Shame has covered my face; I became strange to my brethren and a stranger to my mother's children, because I did not come in faith to the holy Antonij and Feodosij." Every day he expected that he would die.

One day, late at night, he came to himself, reflected on his transgressions, went to the venerable Alimpij, and repented to him. The blessed one said to him, "You have done well, my son, to confess your sins to God in my unworthy presence. For the prophet David said, 'I will confess my iniquity to the Lord against myself; and Thou forgivest the ungodliness of my heart.' "[5] Having instructed him at length about the salvation of his soul, he took up his palette, adorned his face with the colors with which he painted icons, anointed his suppurating wounds, and restored him to his former handsome appearance. He led him to the divine church of the Caves Monastery, administered the holy Mysteries (*communion*) to him, and told him to wash with the [holy] water used by the priests to wash (*their hands in preparation for the rite of the Eucharist*). His sores at once fell away from him, and he was cured.

… As an offering of thanks for his cleansing, the great-grandson of the healed man decorated with gold the chest that hangs about the holy table, and everybody marveled at the speedy recovery. The venerable Alimpij said to them, "Brothers, pay heed to Him Who said, 'No servant can serve two masters.'[6] At first this man served the enemy through the sin of sorcery, but ultimately he came to God. For earlier he had despaired of his salvation, and his leprosy had grown worse because of his lack of faith. 'Ask,' said the Lord, 'and do not only ask, but ask with faith, and you will receive.'[7] When he repented to God and appointed me his witness, He Who is quick to show

mercy had pity on him." After his recovery the man went back to his home, glorifying God and the most pure Mother who bore Him, and our venerable fathers Antonij and Feodosij and the blessed Alimpij. For he was indeed to us a new Elisha (*like the biblical prophet*), who cured Naaman the Syrian of leprosy.[8]

Chapter 2

WITCHCRAFT AND POLITICS IN MUSCOVY AND THE HETMANATE

Politics at the early modern Russian (or Muscovite) court was very much focused on personal connections of kinship, marriage, and patronage, so the choice of brides for the rulers was of utmost political importance. Witchcraft, or rumors of witchcraft, frequently arose in connection with royal marriages. Witchcraft charges also arose when competition among rival factions at court grew particularly fierce, as during the minorities of rulers, when members of the inner circle jockeyed for position, or when a ruler was selecting his royal bride. Royal brides, called grand princesses before 1547 and tsaritsas after that date, were selected through ceremonial bride-shows—that is, displays of eligible young women from whom the ruler could take his pick. As the historian Russell Martin has shown, the brides were generally chosen not from the highest noble (boyar or princely) families but from a lesser tier of nobles. Each prominent family hoped to secure the ruler's favor by placing at his side a young woman favorably inclined toward its interests.[1] Because the tsaritsa's lineage and allegiances were so important to all those in the ruler's entourage, royal wives became

magnets for anxieties about magical meddling. Tsaritsas and brides-to-be were seen as both victims and users of malevolent sorcery.

Not only royal wives and fiancées but also the broader political world were seen as vulnerable to the work of sorcerers. Courtiers were accused of hiring witches and sorcerers to win the ruler's favor or to curse or kill him, and writers warned their rulers of the dangers of losing their moral compass by succumbing to bewitchment. Particularly during the anxious and violent reign of Ivan IV, known as the Terrible (r. 1533–84), when political conflict was intense and the price of losing was high, everyone at court was seemingly infected by fear of bewitchment. Writings from the time reflect a tendency to see spells and potions behind every action and outcome.

It might be tempting to label this heightened level of suspicion and fear as paranoia, except that magic was absolutely real at Ivan the Terrible's court: that is, the tsar and his courtiers, whether friend or foe, sought out the services of acclaimed magicians at the same time that they condemned the use of magic and blamed each other for resorting to it. Ivan himself lured some skilled physician-magicians to Moscow from European centers and consulted them about his health and well-being as well as for policy advice. He not only relied on foreign experts but also purportedly consulted homegrown Russian and Ukrainian village witches and sorcerers.

It is worth emphasizing that rumors about political sorcery and even formal trials of those suspected of employing witches for political purposes did not fade away after the reign of Ivan the Terrible, or even with the accession of the reform-minded Peter the Great or the advent of rationalist Enlightenment thinking under his eighteenth-century successors. Trials of this sort continued right through the eighteenth century, even after Catherine the Great began decriminalizing witchcraft. The later cases presented in this chapter reflect the continuity of fears of the deleterious influence of witchcraft in politics between the world of early modern Muscovy and that of the so-called Age of Enlightenment.

Witchcraft and politics, then, were frequent companions, and they worked sometimes in tandem and sometimes at cross-purposes, as highly placed political actors adopted contradictory positions in their attitude

toward magic. The linkage between witchcraft and politics emerges so strongly in these cases that one leading scholar of Russian magic, W. F. Ryan, asserts that only those cases with "political colouring" were heard in the tsar's courts, while magic outside of political contexts simply passed under the radar. He argues that the country was undergoverned and the chanceries understaffed, so only cases involving "male persons in the employ of the state or the Church" were likely to receive formal trial.[2]

While it is true that in many instances, as we see in this chapter, witchcraft charges were combined with suspicions of high treason or lese majesty—that is, attacks on the ruler, his family, or his dignity—far from all Russian witchcraft trials or anxieties can be described as "political" in any conventional sense of the word. In fact, we might read even the following cases, all of which have been selected for their clear political implications, quite differently. Instead of stressing the political essence of witchcraft, we could emphasize the personal, familial, or even emotional aspects of political life that emerge from the language and sites of anxiety evident in these texts. Witchcraft gives us a lens through which to rethink the very nature of politics.

As already noted in passing above, Ryan also points to the political content of the magical crimes that were brought to trial in an effort to explain the preponderance of *men* among Russian witchcraft suspects. Contrary to the more familiar historical examples of witch trials in early modern Catholic and Protestant Europe and North America, the overwhelming majority of people accused of practicing magic in Russia were men. Ryan suggests that the political aspect of the crime skewed the demographics of the suspect pool. While both men and women actively practiced magic throughout the society, it was men who landed in court facing charges of political magic. Again, Ryan's observations are interesting, but the selection of cases presented here demonstrates that not only is the definition of politics more complicated than one might initially think, but the gender of participants in such magic was not at all monotonic. Both men and women engaged in magical maneuvering at the highest levels of political intrigue. Both men and women hired sorcerers to bewitch their

rivals or to win the tsar's favor; both men and women responded to the call for magical practitioners and provided the appropriate spells and substances, along with detailed instructions for their ritual use. And both men and women were believed to fall victim to magical bewitchment. While men dominated the rosters of the accused in Russian witchcraft trials overall, the world of politics was by no means closed to women, whether magical or otherwise.

2.1 THE DEATH OF MARIA OF TVER, IVAN III'S FIRST WIFE, BY WITCHCRAFT (1467)

Source: *PSRL*, vol. 6: *Sofiiskaia vtoraia letopis'* (St. Petersburg, 1853), 186.

Grand Prince Ivan III of Moscow is celebrated in Russian historical writing for "gathering the Russian lands." This resonant phrase is riddled with misleading implications. "Gathering" suggests a gentle process, whereas the historical record suggests ample use of violence. Moreover, rather than collecting a set of territories that already were "Russian," and that were just waiting to be bundled together and tied up in a Russian bow, Ivan brought under Moscow's control lands whose people had previously enjoyed various degrees of autonomy and were not necessarily thrilled to be part of Moscow's realm.

Nevertheless, Ivan did manage to bring much of what would become first the Grand Principality of Muscovy and then the Tsardom of Russia under his control. One of his important acquisitions was the Grand Principality of Tver, a region just north of Moscow, which had been one of its main historical rivals. Tver joined with Moscow through the marriage of the young Ivan with Princess Maria of Tver. Maria died under mysterious circumstances in 1467, and clear evidence of supernatural foul play was detected by way of the unnatural decomposition of her corpse as it lay on public display. The bereaved husband placed the blame on the wife of one of his courtiers, Aleksei Poluektov. Poluektov's wife, as the passage explains, had sent a belt, via an intermediary, to a *baba*. The term could refer to any older woman of low social standing, often a widow, but it also could designate such a woman who was known as a practicing witch. Such is evidently the case here. The implication here is that the baba would have cast a spell of some sort on the belt, which would then have been brought to the unsuspecting princess in order to cause her demise.

The class and gender dimensions of this case are noteworthy: both suspects and victim were women, and the chain of women implicated in the bewitchment reached from the very highest station (a lady-in-waiting in the grand princess's inner circle) through the wife of a treasury clerk to a poor woman of very low status. People of all ranks believed in, used, and feared sorcery, and magic could unite interests across social rank.

In the year 6975 (1467), on April 25, at the third hour of the night Grand Princess Maria of Tver, the wife of Grand Prince Ivan Vasilevich, died from a deadly potion. This became known because, when they placed the shroud on her, much of it hung loosely, [but] then the body decomposed and spread out, and that shroud no longer sufficed to cover the body. And [she] was placed in the Church of the Holy Ascension in Moscow. Then the grand prince grew enraged against Aleksei Poluektov's wife, Natalia, who had sent a belt with the wife of treasury clerk Borov to a baba; then he grew enraged also against Aleksei and for six years did not allow him in his presence, until he was pardoned.

2.2 WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS AGAINST GRAND PRINCESS SOFIA PALEOLOGUE (1497)

Source: *PSRL*, vol. 6: "Otryvok letopisi po voskresenskomu novoierusalimskomu spisku," 279.

Ivan III's second wife and another set of old women-witches of low social standing (babas) appear as conspirators in an attempt thirty years later to bewitch the grand prince. In 1497, Grand Prince Ivan was deciding whether to instate Vasilii, his son by his second wife, or his grandson Dmitrii (through his first wife) as his successor. One chronicle account records that Ivan became enraged at his son, whom he discovered had assembled a circle of supporters to help him grab the throne for himself. Ivan had Vasilii placed under arrest and had his co-conspirators executed. In this context of dynastic scheming between the two branches of the royal family, Vasilii's mother, Grand Princess Sofia, also fell under suspicion. It is unclear whether Sofia was suspected of using the potion to kill her husband or to win his love and favor. The latter would characterize much of the use of spells and potions attributed to women in trials in the following centuries.

And at that time the grand prince put his wife, Grand Princess Sofia, in disgrace because babas had come to her with a potion. Having investigated these evil babas, the grand prince ordered them executed, drowned in the river in Moscow at night, and from that time he began to live with Sofia in a state of great vigilance. And that same winter, on February 4, in the week of Mytar and Farisei, in memory of the most holy father Sidor Pelusiiskii,[3] Grand Prince Ivan Vasilevich of All Russia blessed and granted the grand principalities of Vladimir and Moscow and All Russia to his grandson Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich (*in other words, he favored his grandson by his first wife, Maria of Tver, whose bewitched corpse we saw in the previous document, over his son by his second wife, now held in suspicion*).

2.3 WITCHCRAFT ACCUSATIONS AGAINST GRAND PRINCESS SOLOMONIA SABUROVA (1525)

Source: *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoiu kommissieiu, vol. 1: 1334–1598* (St. Petersburg, 1841), no. 130, p. 192.

Solomonia Saburova, the daughter of a mid-level Russian nobleman, seemed to reach the pinnacle of fortune in 1505, when she married Vasilii III, the grand prince of Russia (the title of the ruler until 1547, when Ivan IV adopted the imperial title of tsar). Twenty years later, she was still childless, and her husband concocted reasons to dispatch her to a convent and force her to take holy orders (the only recognized form of divorce available in Orthodoxy at the time).

As part of the quest for pretexts, his supporters questioned the grand princess's own brother, Ivan Iurevich Saburov, who testified that she had used magic in an attempt to secure her husband's love. There may be some intimation in the following text that the brother's testimony against his sister was coerced (see the closing addendum), but the charges are plausible in the context of Solomonia's childlessness and the vulnerable position in which she found herself. Both the forms and the goals of the magic she was accused of employing are well attested in later sources on witchcraft. Surviving spell books and testimony in court cases document the use of precisely the same kinds of magic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Women of all social ranks consulted magical practitioners with the goal of conceiving children or securing a husband's love. As in Solomonia's case, they used bewitched water, oil, or honey, and the enchantment's

power was activated through direct physical contact, often by means of intimate articles of clothing.

Report of Ivan Iurevich Saburov, from the investigation into the infertility of [his sister] Grand Princess Solomonia Iurevna

In the year 7034 (1525) in November on the 23rd day, Ivan said:

> The grand princess said to me, "There is a common woman (*zhonka*) called Stefanida of Riazan, who is now in Moscow. Find her and bring her to me. And I tracked down Stefanida and summoned her to my house, and then I sent her to the grand princess's court with my serving woman Nastia. That Stefanida went to the grand princess. And Nastia told me that Stefanida cast spells over some water and rubbed the grand princess with it and looked at her belly and said that the grand princess would have no children. And after that I came to the grand princess, and she said to me: "You sent Stefanida to me, and she looked at me and said that I wouldn't have children. She enchanted some water and told me to rub myself with it so the grand prince would love me. She cast spells over water in a hand basin, and she told me to rub myself with that water, and she instructed me that before the servants bring the grand prince his shirt and trousers and jacket, I should rub my hands with water from that washbasin and pick up the shirt and trousers and jacket and any other undergarments [with my wet hands]." And we came repeatedly to the grand princess bringing a shirt or trousers or some other kind of clothing, and the grand princess, having unfolded the shirt or jacket or whatever other clothing belonging to the grand prince, would rub that clothing with water from the washbasin.

And Ivan also said:

> My lords, the grand princess said to me: "Some people told me of a nun who knows about children. She has no nose. Go find that nun." I sent a young man called Goriainko (who has since run away from me) to find her. He brought her to me in my courtyard, and that nun said a spell over either oil or fresh honey, I don't remember which, and sent it to the grand princess with Nastia. She (*the nun*) instructed the grand princess to rub herself with it, so the grand prince would love her and would give her children. Later I went myself to the grand princess, and the grand princess said to me: "Nastia brought [that honey or oil] to me from the nun, and I rubbed myself with it."[4]

To this report, Ivan placed his hand (*that is, he signed the report*).[5]

(On the reverse side of the page is the following addendum:)

> And Ivan also said: "What can I say, my lords? I don't remember anything more, except that various women and men came to me in connection with this matter."

2.4 TRIALS OF MAKSIM THE GREEK FOR TREASON, HERESY, AND SORCERY (1525 & 1531)

Sources: N. N. Pokrovskii, *Sudnye spiski Maksima Greka i Isaka Sobaki* (Moscow: Glavnoe arkhivnoe upravlenie pri Sovete SSSR, 1971), 96–100. The translation from Maksim the Greek's *Confession of Faith* is from Jack V. Haney, *From Italy to Muscovy: The Life and Works of Maxim the Greek* (Munich: Wilhem Fink Verlag, 1973), 71.

In 1518, Grand Prince Vasilii III had summoned the learned scholar Michael Trivolis or Maksim the Greek (called Maksim Grek in Russian; 1475–1556) from the Vatopedi Monastery on Mount Athos to Moscow as a translator to make corrections to the Church Slavonic version of the Scriptures.[6] Located in northern Greece, the monastic complex on Mount Athos was the center of Orthodox spirituality. Mount Athos was under Ottoman control at the time but retained its sacred position in the Orthodox world.

Maksim's services were useful even before he mastered Russian because no one in Muscovy could translate directly from Greek. Maksim had studied in Italy and acquired a strong command of Latin. For his translation work in Moscow, Latin served as the common language, and translation work went in both directions (Russian to Greek and Greek to Russian) via Latin versions. In other words, the translation work transpired much like a game of Telephone, where inaccuracies could creep in at any stage during this multistage process. And since the texts in question were key religious works, the slightest sloppiness could have dire consequences if the powers-that-be were looking for excuses to condemn someone. A seemingly small grammatical mistake, for instance, landed Maksim in hot water because it inadvertently altered the theologically acceptable relations among the three figures of the Christian Trinity and thereby fundamentally challenged Orthodox doctrine. There was zero tolerance in Muscovite culture for accidental slip-ups. (Maksim's fate makes a strong case for proofreading your work and paying attention to grammar.)

In addition to his translation work, while in Muscovy Maksim wrote treatises and sermons on a variety of subjects. Maksim's critique of Muscovite society, his opposition to monasteries owning land, and diatribes against vices he observed among the top ranks of the Russian Orthodox clergy led to his falling out of favor with the tsar and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. In 1525, he was charged with heresy, treason, and sorcery. Consequently, he was excommunicated, and incarcerated in a monastery. He was retried in 1531 and once again found guilty.

W. F. Ryan, an expert on Russian magic, writes that the accusations that Maksim dabbled in witchcraft and magic "bear all the marks of political witch-hunting rather than of genuine theological concern."[7] Some of the charges brought against Maksim indeed

ring false and seem trumped up by his opponents. However, his challenges to fundamental premises of church finances and Russian religious practices, his tirades against elite immorality, and the unfortunate incident of the grammatical transgression, when layered on top of his foreign connections and his origins in Muslim-controlled Greece, could have easily persuaded his Russian hosts that he was actually practicing sorcery. Moreover, his foreign books and classical ("Hellenic") learning alone constituted proof, or at least a strong presumption, of magical dealings. For instance, more than a century and a half later, possession of foreign mathematical textbooks (and, admittedly, reports of consorting with a demonic spirit) provoked charges of sorcery against the tsar's close adviser, Artamon Matveev. It is difficult to establish with any certainty whether the accusations against Maksim or any other witchcraft suspect were deployed instrumentally or out of genuine fear. It is probably wisest to maintain this as an open question and to bear in mind that the answer may not be one or the other but may instead lie rather somewhere in the gray zone in between.

After the trial, Maksim was dispatched to the Otroch Monastery in Tver, where he was denied access to communion. The patriarchs of Antioch, Constantinople, and Jerusalem were unsuccessful in their attempts to secure the scholar's release. Finally, in the early 1550s, due to the pleas of a number of boyars and the hegumen (abbot) of the Holy Trinity St. Sergius Monastery, the leading Muscovite monastery, Maksim was allowed to take up residence there until his death in 1556. The Russian Orthodox Church later recognized him as a saint.

In 1531, the blessed Holy Council assembled with the Christ-loving Tsar and Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich III of All Russia at its head, together with his spiritual father Right Reverend Metropolitan of All Russia and found new false assertions alongside the previous erroneous criticisms of the Lord God and the Most Pure Mother of God and church rulings and laws, and holy miracle-workers and monasteries and other things by the monk Maksim the Greek of the Holy Mountain (*i.e., Mount Athos*). Maksim had been incarcerated in a dungeon in the Joseph of Volotsk Monastery so that he would return to the true faith and do penance and correct his errors. He was not to be allowed to instruct anyone or write anything or compose messages or send anything to anyone or receive anything from anyone. He did not show repentance or correct his ways and claimed to be totally innocent and philosophized about forbidden things and sent messages.

Thus having examined and condemned not only his unshakeable disposition but also his newest erroneous criticisms of the Lord God and the Most Pure Mother of God and church rulings and laws, and similar things, and having summoned him from the Joseph of Volotsk Monastery and the

Hegumen Nifont and spiritual elders and having brought him from the Joseph of Volotsk Monastery in the town Volokolamsk to Moscow, we have placed him on trial before Daniil, Metropolitan of All Russia, and before the archbishops and bishops and the entire Holy Council.

And Metropolitan Daniil said:

You were sent from the Holy Mountain and from the Turkish realm to the pious and Christ-loving Sovereign Tsar, the Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich III of All Russia for alms. And the sovereign gave you alms and other things (*wording unclear in the original*) and sent many gifts to your monasteries and bestowed great honors upon you. And you should have prayed to God for the health and salvation of the sovereign and his entire pious realm and for the vanquishing of all his enemies.

But together with Savva (*one of the monks who accompanied Maksim to Moscow from Mount Athos*), you had evil rather than good thoughts about the Grand Prince and conferred with and sent letters to the Turkish pashas and to the Turkish Sultan himself, calling for war with the pious and Christ-loving Sovereign and Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich and his entire pious realm.

And didn't you say: should the grand prince conquer Kazan, that would be a disgrace to the Turkish sultan? And that they would respond in kind?

And didn't you receive advice and praise from Iskander, the Turkish envoy, who wanted to encourage the Turkish sultan to go to war against the sovereign grand prince and all his realm? And you, Maksim, knew this and did not inform the sovereign grand prince and his boyars.

And haven't you told many people: "The Turkish sultan will [invade] Russian land because the sultan does not love the relatives of the rulers of Tsargrad (*i.e., Constantinople*), and Grand Prince Vasilii is Thomas of Morea's grandson (*i.e., is descended from the last rulers of Christian Byzantium*)?"[8]

And haven't you, Maksim, called Grand Prince Vasilii dishonorable, an apostate, and a barbaric persecutor and tormentor just like previous dishonorable persecutors and tormentors of Christians.

And didn't you, Maksim, say that "Grand Prince Vasilii yielded land to the Crimean ruler, and fled from him out of fear. And if he fled from the Crimean ruler, would he not run away from the Turkish sultan? If the Turkish sultan attacks, he (*Vasilii*) will either buy him off by handing over important Crimean or Kazanian Tatar captives or else run away?"[9]

And didn't you, Maksim, tell many people: "Here in Moscow they sing liturgical hymns blessing the grand prince and metropolitan with wishes for long life, and they (*the grand prince and metropolitan*) damn heretics. But in so doing they damn themselves since they don't follow the Scriptures and church laws: their own bishops, instead of the Patriarch of Constantinople, choose their metropolitan for Moscow?"

And didn't you, Maksim, with your magical Hellenic (*Greek*) mastery, write on the palms of your hands with vodka and then hold out your hands against the grand prince, and you have

used sorcery against many others in like fashion?[10]

And you lived in the Joseph of Volotsk Monastery. And the elder Tikhon Lepkov was ordered to watch you, while the spiritual elder Iona served as your confessor. And you, Maksim, said to them: "I know everything that is going on everywhere." That constitutes Hellenic and heretical sorcery. That is the way that Simon the Magician (*i.e., Simon Magus, mentioned in the New Testament*) talked about himself, saying that he knew everything that is going on everywhere, and in his sorcerer's daydreams he took demons high up into the heavens, but the apostle Peter hurled him down to earth from the upper reaches, sending him to his death. That is the way that countless other heretics, who tempted and destroyed their fellow countrymen, also spoke. Take for example, the magician Iliodor; St. Leo, the bishop of Catania, tied his hands with his holy omophorion (*a vestment worn by Orthodox bishops; it is adorned with crosses*) and led him into a bonfire. (*The sorcerer perished while the bishop remained unharmed.*) St. Leo then entered the church and served the holy liturgy. Other God-opposing heretics conduct themselves that way even now. They bleat like sheep and carry on seductive conversations just like you, Maksim, tempt and destroy people with your talk.

And didn't you, Maksim, tell and instruct many people and write in books that Christ's sitting to the right of the Father was a mutable position that came to an end a long time ago, just like Adam's being in Heaven?

And didn't you, Maksim, already reproach and falsely criticize the holy saints of the conciliar apostolic churches and monasteries for having property, including people and profits and villages? Your monasteries on the Holy Mount and the churches and monasteries in other places in your land own villages, and the writings and vitae of the Holy Fathers ordered holy churches and monasteries to possess them.

And didn't you, Maksim, reproach and falsely criticize the holy and great miracle-workers Petr, Aleksei, and Iona, metropolitans of All Russia, and the holy sainted miracle-workers Sergius, Varlaam, Kirill, Pafnutii, and Makarii, saying that: "In so far as they possessed towns and districts and villages and people, and served as judges, collected duties and dues and tributes, and had a lot of wealth, they can never be miracle workers?"

And also Maksim, a major spiritual council tried you before Prince Vasilii and before us and the archbishops and bishops and all the clerics in the palace of the grand prince. The grand prince's relatives and all the boyars were also at the council. Then later at the court of the metropolitan those same false accusations and others, which turned out to be well-known as attributable to you, were aired; the false accusations resulting from your evil reasoning were presented before us in our court and before many meetings of the entire Holy Council; and your like-minded colleagues and advisers were with you at the council, and in the evidence we presented regarding the Scriptures and in the reading of those materials not once were you correct in your knowledge, reasoning, and corrections.

And you lived in the Joseph of Volotsk Monastery so as to reform your ways, and Tikhon Lenkov was ordered to keep an eye on you and the ordained monk Iona was appointed your spiritual adviser. You said to Tikhon and ordained monk Iona: "Since coming out of my mother's womb until the present time I am free of all sin and I am guilty of nothing; it is wrong

to hold me when I am without guilt. I learned how to philosophize and for that I am proud. And I know everything that is going on everywhere."

And you Maksim are always justifying yourself; you are conceited and boastful, but you do not admit to even a single sin or fault since you emerged from your mother's womb, and you have not repented, confessed, and corrected your ways with regard to not only your false criticisms of the Lord God and his laws but also everything else that we have repeatedly told you.

And that of which you boast with your magical tricks and Hellenic and Judaic black arts has been completely outlawed from Christian dogma and practices; and it is inappropriate for a Christian to dabble in those teachings. And you, Maksim, not only do not repent of all of your above-mentioned accusations but even heap evil upon evil: with your Hellenic and Judaic teachings and dark magic and sorcery, prohibited by Christian dogma and practices, you are boastful and conceited, and tempt and ruin many a Christian.

Maksim the Greek's confession of faith

(In this work Maksim the Greek admits that he may have made grammatical errors in his translations of Scripture:)

When the correction of the Triodion (*Orthodox liturgical book for the weeks of preparation for Lent, Lent itself, and Holy Week*) was undertaken by me, I translated the words to your translators Dmitrij and Vlas in Latin, for I had not yet mastered your language. If you find anything blasphemous in the expressions used then justice requires that they should be found guilty of such improper work and not I; for then I did not know the difference between these expressions. Had I known, I should never have been silent about it, but would have corrected this improper slip of the pen in every possible way. For what use to me would these black rags (*i.e., monastic robes*), these prayers, this monastic life and all these long years of suffering be if I turned out to be blaspheming my Lord, God and Saviour Jesus Christ in Whom I have hoped since my youth. If ever I thought or think anything so blasphemous or if ever I should be inclined in the future to think against Our Lord Jesus Christ, as my calumniators unjustly accuse me, then let the Lord not permit me that future communion with the faithful or that position at the right hand of the awful Judge who shall come to judge the quick and the dead, but let me be banished from their presence and be deprived of the eternal glory and joy, and with the infamous Arius (*a North African Christian of the late third–early fourth century who was labeled a heretic by the Church*) shall I be condemned to the fire of perdition.

2.5 THE GREAT MOSCOW FIRE AND THE SPRINKLING OF HUMAN HEARTS BY

THE TSAR'S GRANDMOTHER, ANNA GLINSKAIA (1547)

Source: *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod: Russkaia letopisnaia istoriia*, bk. 20: 1541–1551 gg. (Moscow: Akteon, 2011), 331–35, 343–49, 551–52.

In a dramatic episode early in the reign of Ivan IV, witchcraft was blamed not on a poor baba but on Ivan's own grandmother, Anna Glinskaia. The *Tsarstvennaia kniga*, a portion of a massive, illustrated history of the world produced in a single manuscript copy in the 1560s or 1570s, describes an outbreak of witchcraft hysteria following the terrible fires that raged through Moscow in 1547. Two days after the fire, rumors began to spread that explained the conflagration as the result of witchcraft practiced by Glinskaia and her two adult sons, the tsar's maternal uncles. The chronicles inform us that the rumors were deliberately started by political rivals to the Glinskii faction at court. Bitter factionalism split the boyars, the highest rung of the Muscovite nobility. The chronicle entries narrate a dramatic tale of witchcraft and politics and demonstrate the boyars' facile manipulation of the common townspeople through playing on their fears of dark magic.

The general outlines of the events were narrated in the neat, calligraphic lines of chronicle text and were depicted in illustrations accompanying the manuscript in which the history of the period is recorded. Section titles and initial letters on each page appear in red ink, a practice known as "rubrication." For this particular episode, along with only a very few other highly charged political moments, additional passages were scribbled onto the pages and between the lines. The interpolations convey a richer and darker sense of the tensions at play. Figure 2 shows the way the scribbled additions appear on the manuscript page. They enrich the tale of sorcery and arson, and they contain one of the very few mentions in Muscovite sources of magical transfiguration: the sovereign's grandmother purportedly turned into a magpie in order to fly across Moscow and burn it down with her ghastly potion.[11]

The titulature may be a little confusing in this and subsequent passages from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Prior to 1547, the ruler of Russia was known as the grand prince. Subsequent to his coronation as tsar in 1547, Ivan IV carried two titles: tsar and grand prince. His successors would continue this tradition. Where the text mentions "the tsar and grand prince," it refers to the single person of the ruler.

Of the Great Fire

That same month (*June*) on the 21st day, on Tuesday at the tenth hour after sunrise during the third week of St. Peter's Fast, the Cathedral of the Elevation of the Holy Cross beyond the Neglinnaia River on Arbat Street, on

the island, burned down. And since there was a great storm and fire flowed like lightning, and the fire was strong, in a single hour the fire spread from the area beyond the Neglinnaia and … burned as far as the village of Semchinskoe, along the Moscow River and to the Church of St. Feodor on Arbat Street. And the wind turned toward the center of the city and the upper part of the Dormition Cathedral in the Kremlin burned. And in the court of the tsar and grand prince, the roofs burned, and wooden buildings, and palaces ornamented with gold, and the Treasury office with the tsar's treasure burned, and the church in the tsar's court, and … the gold-domed Cathedral of the Annunciation, the Deesis (*a row of icons*)[12] painted by Andrei Rublev,[13] that was covered with a gold overlay, and images decorated with gold and with precious pearls by Greek icon painters, collected by his ancestors over many years, and the treasure of the grand prince burned. And the Armory Palace burned entirely with weapons of war and the Linens Palace with its treasure burned entirely, and in the basements of the tsar's court under the palaces everything made of wood inside them burned, and the tsar's stables burned. And in many masonry churches the Deesis rows burned up, as did icons and church vessels, and homes of many people and the metropolitan's court. By divine intervention of the immaculate Mother of God and by the prayers of the holy miracle-workers Petr and Iona,[14] the Deesis row of the cathedral church of her honorable and glorious Assumption and all the church vessels were preserved. And Metropolitan Makarii barely made it out of the church when by God's will a smoky cloud almost suffocated those inside the church….

Figure 2: Killing of Iurii Glinskii, from *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod XVI veka: Russkaia letopisnaia istoriia*, book 20, *1541–1551 gg.* (Moscow: AKTEON, 2011), 347. Reproduced courtesy of AKTEON.

In a single hour, many multitudes of people burned. Seventeen hundred people of the male and female sex, and infants burned…. All of this was sent to us by God for our sins, because of the increasing multitude of sinners and lawlessness. God by his righteous judgment brings us to repentance whether through fire or hunger or military invasion or through pestilence. Books

about the history of past times never recorded such a terrible fire in Moscow until now…. And after the fire the tsar and grand prince stayed in his village of Vorobyevo[15] with his tsaritsa, Grand Princess Anastasia, and with his brother Prince Iurii, and with the boyars. And he ordered the churches and palaces in his court that had been destroyed by the fire to be rebuilt, and to erect wooden buildings.

Of the killing of Prince Iurii Glinskii

(The indented sections come from the interpolations:)

> Two days after the fire, the tsar and grand prince came to visit Metropolitan Makarii in Novoe, and the boyars came with him. And hostile rumors began to circulate, alleging that through means of sorcery a human heart had been taken out and soaked in water and then that water was sprinkled around the city, and because of that all of Moscow burned. These rumors were started by the tsar's confessor, Fedor, archpriest of the Annunciation Cathedral, and by the boyar Prince Fedor Skopin Shuiskii and Ivan Petrov Fedorov. And the tsar and grand prince ordered the boyars to conduct an investigation.
>
> The boyars came to the square in front of the Dormition Cathedral and gathered the taxpaying townspeople (*chernye liudi*) and began to question them: "Who set fire to Moscow?" They began to claim that "Princess Anna Glinskaia (*the tsar's maternal grandmother*), with her sons and [their] men, had worked sorcery (*volkhvovala*): she took out a human heart and put it in water and went riding around Moscow with that water and sprinkling it, and because of that, Moscow burned down." The townspeople said this because at that time the Glinskiis were close to the sovereign and in his favor, and their servants and supporters committed violence and robbery against the townspeople, and because of that they could not be calmed.
>
> On the 26th of that same month, on Sunday, five days after the great fire, because of the great suffering caused by the fire, the taxpaying townspeople of Moscow (*chernye liudi*) rose up in rebellion, acting like madmen (*iurodi*). They came to the city and on the square they began striking the boyar prince Iurii Glinskii with rocks and they killed many service men (*deti boiarskie*). And they killed innumerable people in Prince Iurii's service and stole his possessions, crying out in their frenzy: "because you set them on fire, our homes and property all burned."

Prince Mikhailo Glinskii was at that time with his mother on his estate, granted to him by the tsar, in Rzhev.[16] Prince Iurii Glinskii was at that time heading there too, but when he heard such unseemly words about his mother and about himself, he went to the church in Prechistaia. Because of the enmity between them and the Glinskiis, the boyars riled up the townspeople. And they seized Prince Iurii in the church and killed him in the church, and then they dragged him out through the forward doors onto the square and into the city and put him in the marketplace, at the execution block. In this

conspiracy were Archpriest of the Annunciation Fedor Barmin, Prince Fedor Shuiskii, Prince Iurii Temkin, Ivan Petrov Fedorov, Grigorii Iurevich Zakharin, Fedor Nagoi, and many others. (*The incensed townspeople said:*) "Your mother, Princess Anna, took flight in the form of a magpie and set the fire." Many unknown lesser servicemen from Severshchina (*that is, foreigners from the Grand Duchy of Lithuania*), being called Glinskii people, were also killed. And on the third day after the killing, many townspeople came in a mob to the sovereign in Vorobevo saying ugly things, claiming that the sovereign was protecting Princess Anna and Prince Mikhailo and he should hand them over to them.

The tsar and grand prince ordered those people seized and executed.

Many of them fled to other cities, recognizing their guilt and what their own senselessness had brought about.

2.6 IVAN PERESVETOV'S 1549 TALE ABOUT SORCERY AT COURT IN THE FINAL DAYS OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE (EXCERPTS FROM THE "GREATER PETITION")

Source: From the "Bol'shaia chelobitnaia" or "Long Petition" of Ivan Semenovich Peresvetov, in *Sochineniia I. Peresvetova,* ed. A. A. Zimin and D. S. Likhachev (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1956); electronic publication: *Elektronnaia publikatsiia* 5/10/2017, Elektronnaia biblioteka IRLI RAN, Sobranie tekstov, Biblioteka literatury Drevnei Rusi, vol. 9: Sochineniia Ivan Semenovicha Peresvetova.

Our nice, clear-cut title, "Ivan Peresvetov's 1549 Tale," epitomizes the challenges and pleasures of working on the Muscovite period. Every element of that title is questionable. In the works attributed to him, Peresvetov describes himself as an Orthodox nobleman from Western Rus, the Slavic lands controlled at the time by the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. He appears to have been born in the early sixteenth century and to have died in the 1550s or 1560s. But he may never have been a real person at all. He may have been manufactured as a literary pseudonym and employed by one or more authors in works written in the 1540s or later. Yeshayahu Gruber observes in a recent article on Peresvetov, "Scholarly opinion has swung convincingly to the side of belief in Peresvetov's

existence and authorship in the first half of the sixteenth century, though many specific questions remain unanswered."[17] Among the remaining mysteries are the extent to which the texts attributed to Peresvetov retain their original character and how much they were altered in later years. Regarding the "Greater Petition," from which these excerpts are taken, for instance, experts place its date of composition between 1548 and 1550, with the weight of opinion affirming that it was submitted to the tsar in 1549. However, the earliest surviving copy dates to the 1620s, and the manuscript could have been significantly reworked in the intervening eight decades. According to Gruber, "Textual incongruities do suggest that the petition attributed to Peresvetov was at least modified and supplemented, if not systematically reworked, in the process of transmission."[18]

If indeed Peresvetov was who he claimed to be, before coming to Moscow and enrolling in the service of the tsar, he served for some months in the service of a certain Peter (Petru) IV Rareş, ruler of Moldavia (r. 1527–38, 1541–46), whom Peresvetov identifies as "the voivode of Wallachia." This Peter figures prominently in the "Greater Petition." Gruber writes that "It is not entirely clear why Peresvetov chose to speak through Peter in the 'Greater petition', but it may be in response to a perceived need to appeal to a foreign Orthodox Christian authority. Given the nature of Peresvetov's argumentation, a Byzantine source would not have been suitable."[19]

What was Peresvetov's point in writing this petition, which he addressed directly to Tsar Ivan IV? The petition presents a softened version of one of Peresvetov's earlier works, "Tale of Sultan Mehmed," in which he extolled the martial resolve of the Turkish sultan and the commitment to truth and justice with which he ruled. He contrasted this paragon of a ruler to the weak-willed Byzantine emperor who squandered the resources of his realm and lost God's favor through his refusal to take up arms against enemies at home and abroad, and ultimately failed to protect Byzantium from the Turks in 1453. The Tale's startling presentation of a Muslim ruler in such a favorable light and its equally strong condemnation of an Orthodox Christian ruler make it unique among Muscovite literary works.

Through the ventriloquized voice of Peter of Wallachia, the "Greater Petition" takes up many of the same themes as the Tale, but with somewhat less ferocity. It builds in an emphasis on Christian faith as a necessary complement to the commitment to truth and justice so admired in the Turkish sultan. And it addresses the Muscovite tsar directly, urging him to adopt specific policies and approaches in order to win military victories, to ensure the well-being of his state and his people, and to curb the greedy and self-serving instincts of his noblemen and administrators.

Along the way in this strange document, the theme of magic exercised at the highest levels of power enters the story. Peresvetov warns the tsar of the dangers of allowing cunning sorcerers into his inner circle of advisers. He tells a cautionary tale of the dangers of sorcerer-grandees with their seductive lies and their devilish ways. He spins out an elaborate dark fantasy of the particular crimes such sorcerer-advisers might commit. The introduction of sinister magicians who pervert court politics echoes similar concerns in other sources from the period of Ivan the Terrible (see Documents 2.5 and 2.7–2.9), supporting recent arguments in support of the petition's authenticity.

This is a text that demands slow and careful reading in order to appreciate its bizarre and twisting logic.

The wisdom of Greek philosophers and Latin doctors and of Peter, voivode of Wallachia:

And these speeches and royal deeds of the rulers of many kingdoms were brought to the pious Tsar and Grand Prince Ivan Vasilevich of All Russia by Ivan, son of Semen Peresvetov.

And Peter, voivode of Wallachia, says, and prays to God:

> Oh Lord, watch over and be merciful to the pious Russian Tsar and Grand Prince Ivan Vasilevich of All Russia, and to his tsardom, and do not let him be caught by his grandees with lies spawned by their heresy and their slyness. And further do not tame his martial spirit or let him fear death, the way the rich wish they will never die. In this way the grandees tamed the martial spirit of the pious Emperor (*in Russian, "tsar"*) Constantine Ivanovich (*Emperor Constantine XI Palaeologus*) of Constantinople (*in Russian, "Tsargrad"*) with their lies and their heresy and their sloth, for the sake of their greed, and they lost the true empire (*tsardom*), and the pious emperor was killed by foreigners' swords. Wise philosophers have long withheld their praise from grandees that gain proximity to the emperor not through military service and not through any other form of wisdom, but through that which the wise philosophers describe as follows: "It is sorcerers (*charodei*) and heretics who steal the emperor's happiness and his wisdom, and they draw the emperor's heart toward themselves and inflame it with heresy and sorcery and timidity in war."

And thus speaks Peter, voivode of Wallachia:

> It is fitting to burn such people with fire and to prescribe to them other cruel deaths, so that evil does not multiply. Without addressing their guilt, the emperor's martial ardor is sapped and the emperor's reason is taken away. An emperor cannot be without martial spirit: the angels of God, the heavenly powers, these do not let their fiery weapons out of their hands for a single hour. They have prodded all Christians since the time of Adam and to this very hour, and they do not relax their zeal in God's service. So how can an emperor exist without military courage? A warrior emperor is strong and glorious. The emperor should have God's grace and great wisdom in his empire, and he should be as generous to his warriors as a father to his children. An emperor's generosity to his warriors is his wisdom. A generous hand never stints in anything, and will bring great glory on itself.

And thus speaks Peter, voivode of Wallachia:

In Constantinople, the warriors of the pious Emperor Constantine became poor and destitute, while sinners and tax collectors grew rich. And other warriors, seeing the pious emperor's lack of supervision of his military, left the military and became tax collectors, and the empire of Constantine became impoverished, as did the emperor's treasury. And the tax collectors themselves grew rich: if they were sent somewhere to collect the emperor's taxes, where they were supposed to take ten rubles, they would take ten rubles for the emperor and one hundred rubles for themselves. And whomever the emperor's grandees dispatched to do government work, the tax collectors would find a way to get a cut for themselves. And the empire of the pious Emperor Constantine grew poor and the emperor's treasury emptied, and they grew rich from the blood and tears of Christendom. And the grandees complained about one another to Emperor Constantine about tax-farming privileges and about cities, and about [lucrative] postings, like hungry dogs, feasting on the blood and tears of Christian people.[20] And the emperor affirmed their will in everything, his heart delighted in everything of theirs, and he unleashed a civil war among his grandees in his own realm. And all of this enraged the Lord.

And thus spake Peter, voivode of Wallachia:

Greek courts were unrighteous, their contracts unclean: merchants could not set prices for their wares. First they sold their souls, and then also their wares. Their dealings were unclean. And the emperor's grandees in the cities and in the provinces plotted with their cunning, with devilish seductions: they took the bodies of the newly buried dead from their coffins, and they collected the empty coffins, but they pierced those dead bodies with spears and cut them with swords, and they rubbed them with blood, and then they threw them into rich people's homes. And then they would plant a witness, a slanderer, who had no fear of God, to testify against the rich people, and they would be tried in the unrighteous courts, and they would steal their homes and all of their wealth. They enriched themselves with diabolic seductions in an unclean way, but the emperor's wrath did not fall on them. With all of this, they angered God. The Lord God was so enraged by this that with his inappeasable holy rage, he sent into them captivity under the foreign Sultan Mehmed (*II*), the Turkish emperor, son of Murad (*II*), from a lesser branch of a thievish clan. And Mehmed-Sultan demanded that Constantinople and Emperor Constantine hand over the Christian faith to him in accordance with the power granted to him by God because of their (*the grandees'*) sinfulness, because of their pride, and because they violently kept the people (*mir*) away from the emperor and did not allow petitioners into his presence. And during Constantine's reign, no one participated in his councils other than his grandees. And they, the grandees, inflicted great harm in the realm and impoverished the empire. They not only drove the people away from the emperor, and not only kept petitioners away from him, but they also cut the emperor off from God's mercy.

And thus spake Peter, voivode of Wallachia.

2.7 JEROME HORSEY ON WITCHCRAFT AT THE COURT OF IVAN IV (THE TERRIBLE)

Source: Sir Jerome Horsey, "Travels," in *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers*, ed. Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 279–80, 292–93, 303–6. Brackets in the original. Berry, Lloyd. RUDE AND BARBAROUS KINGDOM. © 1969 by the Board of Regents of the University of Wisconsin System. Reprinted by permission of the University of Wisconsin Press.

Jerome Horsey (1550–1626), an English adventurer, composed an account of his travels in Muscovy, working on it sporadically for years, probably between 1589 and 1621. He served both the English and the Russians, working as "a successful, although unscrupulous commercial agent," while he simultaneously "ingratiated himself with Ivan IV (1530–1584) and Boris Godunov (d. 1605) and found satisfaction in running their diplomatic errands."[21] His account is of variable historical veracity but is packed full of vivid anecdotes and vicious character sketches. It offers one of the goriest pictures of Ivan the Terrible's cruelty during the destructive period of the Oprichnina, when he made war on segments of his own population, including leading members of the court and church. Horsey's account is considered to be self-serving and self-aggrandizing and therefore not always reliable, and the stories reproduced here contain some confusion in dates and mix together various atrocities. Nonetheless, Horsey provides a rare firsthand account by a foreigner of the Muscovite court and its practices, written from safe haven abroad, without any fear of retribution by an angry tsar.

Horsey offers insights into the prevalence of both European and indigenous magic at court. The tsar's erratic treatment of his hired witches and magicians also reveals the deep ambivalence that Muscovites harbored toward the practitioners of magic. Horsey asserts that the tsar himself kept a crew of hired witches and diviners, whom he alternately consulted and condemned. Ivan's reliance on witches is echoed in the writings of Prince Andrei Kurbskii (see the documents in 2.9) and in other sources from the period (see Documents 2.5, 2.6, and 2.8).

The following extracts prove enlightening on a number of levels. In the discussion of Eliseus Bomel (also featured in Document 2.8), Horsey notes the importance of Western physician-magicians at the tsar's court. The muddled account of the crimes of the bishop of Novgorod highlights the kinds of offenses that could be clustered together with accusations of sorcery. The long discourse attributed to the tsar just before his death (predicted by witches) attests to his familiarity with European learned or high magic. This

learning is evident in Ivan's lengthy catalog of the magical properties of "unicorn horn" and precious stones.

(Ivan IV–here called "the emperor"–consults with the foreign magician Eleazar Bomelius/Eliseus Bomel in hopes of contracting a marriage with Queen Elizabeth of England)

This emperor's delight, hands and heart being thus imbrued in blood, making his chief exercise to devise and put in execution new torments, tortures, and deaths upon such as he took displeasure against and had in most jealousy, those especially of his nobility of best credit and most beloved of his subjects, he countenancing the most desperate captains, soldiers, and decayed sort to affront them and breed faction; whereby indeed there grew such factions and jealousy as they durst not trust one another to ruinate and displace him as they were willing to do; all which he perceived and knew that his estate and case for safety grew every day more desperate and in danger than other and troubled much how to shun and escape the same, was very inquisitive with one Eleazar Bromelius, as you have heard, sometimes a cozening imposter, doctor of physic in England, a rare mathematician, magician, and of others, what years Queen Elizabeth was of, what likely success there might be if he should be a suitor unto her for himself. And though he was much disheartened, not only for that he had two wives living and that many kings and great princes that had been suitors to her majesty and could not prevail, yet he magnified himself, his person, his wisdom, greatness, and riches above all other princes, would give the assay, and presently puts that empress, his last wife, into a nunnery to live there as dead to the world.[22]

(Physician Bomel and Archbishop Leonid of Novgorod charged with treason, sorcery, and other abominations)

At this time he (*Ivan IV*) was very much busied by searching out a notable treason in practice and purpose against him by Eleazar Bomelius, the bishop of Novgorod, and some others, discovered by their servants, tortured upon the *pytka* or rack, letters written in ciphers, Latin and Greek, sent three manner of ways to the kings of Poland and Sweden.[23] The bishop upon examination confessed all. Bomelius denied all, hoping to fare the better by

means of some (*of*) his confederates, as it was thought favorites near about the king, whom the emperor had appointed to attend his son Tsarevich Ivan to examine the said Bomelius upon the rack; his arms drawn back disjointed, and his legs stretched from his middle loins, his back and body cut with wire whips; confessed much and many things more than was written or willing the emperor should know. The emperor sent word they should roast him. Taken from the pytka and bound to a wooden pole or spit, his bloody cut back and body roasted and scorched till they thought no life in him, cast into a sled brought through the castle, I pressed among many others to see him; cast up his eyes naming Christ; cast into a dungeon and died there. He lived in great favor and pomp, a skillful mathematician, a wicked man, and a practice of much mischief. Most of the nobles were glad of his dispatch, for he knew much by them. He had conveyed great riches and treasure out of the country by way of England to Wesel in Westphalia, where he was born, though brought up in Cambridge. An enemy always to our nation. He had deluded the emperor, making him believe the queen of England was young, and that it was very feasible for him to marry her, whereof he was now out of hope. Yet heard she had a young lady in her court of the blood royal named the Lady Mary Hastings, of which we shall speak more hereafter.

The bishop of Novgorod was condemned of his treason and of coining money and sending it and other treasure to the king of Poland and Sweden, of buggery, of keeping witches and boys and beasts, and other horrible crimes. All his goods, horses, money, and treasure was confiscated to the king, which was much; himself to everlasting imprisonment; lived in a cave with irons on his head and legs, made and painted pictures and images, combs and saddles, with bread and water. Eleven of his confederate servants hanged at his palace gate at Moscow and his women witches shamefully dismembered and burned.

(The tsar continued to pursue the hope of negotiating a marriage with the queen's kinswoman, Lady Mary Hastings.)

(Witches predict the tsar's death)

The king, so inflamed with the effecting of his desire, would yield to anything that propounded; yea, promise that, if this marriage did take effect with the queen's kinswoman, her issue should inherit the crown.[24] The princes and nobles, especially those nearest alliance to the prince's wife, the family of the Godunovs,[25] much grieved and offended at this, found by secret practice and plotted a remedy to cross and overthrow all these designs. The king in fury, much distracted and doubting, caused many witches' magicians presently to be sent for out of the north, where there is store between Kholmogory and Lapland.[26] Threescore were brought post to … Moscow, placed and guarded, and daily dieted and daily visited and attended on by the emperor's favorite, Bogdan Belskii, who was only trusted by the emperor to receive and bring from them their divinations or oracles upon the subjects that was given them in charge. This favorite was now revolted in faith to the king, wholly seeking now and serving the turns of the sun-rising, wearied and tired with the devilish tyrannical practices, horrible influences, and wicked devices of this Heliogabalus (*a tyrannical Roman emperor*).[27] The soothsayers tell him that the best signs, [constellations], and strongest planets of heaven was against the emperor, which would produce his end by such a day, but he durst not to tell him; so he fell in a rage and told them they were very likely to be all burned that day. The emperor began grievously to swell in his testes, with which he had most horribly offended above fifty years together, boasting of thousand virgins he had deflowered and thousands of children of his begetting destroyed.

(The tsar extols the magical properties of gemstones and unicorn horn)

Carried every day in his chair into his treasury. One day the prince beckoned me to follow. I stood among the rest venturously and heard him call for some precious stones and jewels. Told the prince and nobles present before and about him the virtue of such and such, which I observed, and do pray I may a little digress to declare for my own memory sake.

"The loadstone you all know hath great and hidden virtue, without which the seas that compass the world are not navigable nor the bounds nor circle of the earth cannot be known. Muhammad, the Persians' prophet, his tomb

of steel hangs in their Ropata[28] at Derbent most miraculously." Caused the waiters to bring a chain of needles touched by this loadstone (*magnet*), hanged all one by the other. "This fair coral and this fair turquoise you see; take in your hand; of his nature are orient colors; put them on my hand and arm. I am poisoned with disease; you see they show their virtue by the change of their pure color into pall; declares my death. Reach out my staff royal, an unicorn's horn garnished with very fair diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and other precious stones that are rich in value, cost seventy thousand marks sterling…. Seek out for some spiders." Caused his physician, Johan Eilof,[29] to scrape a circle thereof upon the table; put within it one spider and so one other and died, and some other without that ran alive apace from it. "It is too late, it will not preserve me. Behold these precious stones. This diamond is the orient's richest and most precious of all other. I never affected it; it restrains fury and luxury and abstinacy and chastity; the least parcel of it in powder will poison a horse given to drink, much more a man." Points at the ruby. "O! This is most comfortable to the heart, brain, vigor, and memory of man, clarifies congealed and corrupt blood." Then at the emerald. "The nature of the rainbow, this precious stone is an enemy to uncleanness. Try it; though man and wife cohabit in lust together, having this stone about them, it will burst at the spending of nature. The sapphire I delight in; it preserves and increaseth courage, joys the heart, pleasing to all the vital senses, precious and very sovereign for the eyes, clears the sight, takes away bloodshot, and strengthens the muscles and strings thereof." Takes the onyx in hand. "All these are God's wonderful gifts, secrets in nature, and yet reveals them to man's use and contemplation, as friends to grace and virtue and enemies to vice. I faint; carry me away till another time."

(The death of the tsar)

In the afternoon peruseth over his will and yet thinks not to die; he hath been bewitched in that place and often times unwitched again, but now the devil fails. Commands the master of his apothecary and physicians to prepare and attend for his solace and bathing, looks for the goodness of the

sign, send his favorite to his witches again to know their calculations. He comes and tells them the emperor will bury or burn them all quick for their false illusions and lies. The day is come…. The emperor in his loose gown, shirt, and linen hose faints and falls backwards. Great outcry and stir; one sent for aqua-vitae, another to the apothecary for marigold and rosewater and to call his ghostly father (*his priest-confessor*) and the physicians. In the mean he was strangled (*i.e., unable to breathe*) and stark dead.

2.8 THE VICIOUS SORCERER ELEAZAR BOMELIUS DESCRIBED IN A RUSSIAN CHRONICLE

Source: Pskov Third Chronicle, "Okonchanie Arkhivskogo 2-go spiska," in *Pskovskie letopisi*, ed. A. N. Nasonov (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1955), 2:262.

The court of Ivan IV Vasilevich, the Terrible, was an unstable and dangerous place, where suspicions of treachery and rumors of betrayal could lead to rapid changes of fortune and brutal execution. In the late 1570s, the tsardom was involved in an endless war with its northwestern neighbor, Livonia (current-day Latvia and Estonia), which drew in all of the other regional powers, including Poland-Lithuania and Sweden. In addition to a losing war, the tsardom still was suffering from Ivan's dreadful Oprichnina, the period when he unleashed a private army of brutal armed supporters (*oprichniks*) to loot and pillage the country, to rape and kill members of the general public with impunity. In addition, Ivan and his henchmen carried out a campaign of theatrical executions and mass killings. In these tumultuous conditions, the tsar's court made fertile ground for suspicions of witchcraft. This excerpt from a later Russian chronicle confirms what we have already seen in the previous document: that the tsar himself was happy to hire witches and sorcerers, at the same time that he had no hesitation in charging his enemies with sorcery or executing his own hired witches when their predictions failed to please him.

This passage discusses the same German-born English physician, Eleazar Bomelius/Eliseus Bomel, discussed in the previous entry, here called by a Russian version of his name, Elisei. This offers an unusual opportunity to compare Russian and foreign accounts of the same episode of witchcraft and magic. See the previous entry by the Englishman Jerome Horsey (Document 2.7).

The last twenty years of Ivan's reign seem to have been particularly productive of rumors, tales, accusations, and practices of sorcery at court. References to witches and

sorcerers and their destructive effects on political life are also frequent in the writings of court polemicists, such as Ivan Peresvetov (see Document 2.6), Prince Andrei Kurbskii, and Tsar Ivan himself (see the documents in 2.9).

The following passage comes from a section of an addendum to the Pskov Chronicle from the mid- to late seventeenth century (The last entry in the addendum dates to 1650). This passage falls into an extended discussion of the Livonian War, dated 1570–81, but recounts events from approximately 1578–84 (the death of the tsar).

Scarcely had the tsar returned to Rus than the Germans (*that is, Livonians*) gathered again from beyond the sea, from major cities, from Lithuania and Poland, sweeping through even little towns and taking them and attacking the people. And they sent a vicious German sorcerer (*volkhv*) called Elisei to the tsar with the goal of inserting him as a favorite of the tsar among his inner circle. And he confronted the tsar with the devastation and refugees from the invasion of the faithless ones and [intended] finally to lead the tsar away from the [Orthodox] faith: the tsar unleashed ferocity on the Russian people and showered the Germans with love. And because those godless ones discovered through their divination that they would be utterly ruined, they sent that evil heretic to the tsar, knowing that Russians love charms (*prelesti*) and are enticed by sorcery (*volkhvovanie*). And many multitudes of boyar and princely lineages were killed by the tsar's instruction. Finally, the sorcerer convinced him to flee to England and there to marry and to abandon his boyars. [The tsar was ready to comply] but was not given time to carry it out. His own death betrayed him and the Russian tsardom and Christian faith avoided total destruction. Such was the reign of the Terrible Tsar, Ivan Vasilevich.

In the year 1574/75, Tsar Ivan Vasilevich disgraced the archbishop of Novgorod Leonid. He had him brought him to Moscow, stripped him of his office and, having sewed him inside a bearskin, fed him to the dogs.

2.9 SORCERY ALLEGATIONS FROM IVAN THE TERRIBLE'S CORRESPONDENCE WITH PRINCE

KURBSKII AND KURBSKII'S *HISTORY OF THE GRAND PRINCE OF MOSCOW*

In 1564, Prince Andrei Kurbskii, a member of Ivan IV's inner circle and one of his top military leaders, defected to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where he was warmly received and supported. From his new refuge, he sent an angry letter to his former sovereign, accusing him of betraying his obligations as ruler through his ferocity, brutality, and sinful excess. Incensed, the tsar shot back with his own wrathful reply. Several more fiery epistolary exchanges followed. If these letters are genuine—and that matter has generated controversy over the last half-century—they are extraordinary documents, rare first-person accounts. They provide insights into the psyches, motivations, and life experiences of these two sixteenth-century individuals and reveal the assumptions about God and man, about governance, virtue, sin, and causation that ordered these men's mental universe.

Or perhaps they don't. The epistles are so exceptional for their age that some scholars have concluded that they were later forgeries, products of the later sixteenth or seventeenth century. In that case, they retain their value as sources for that later period, but their utility as ego documents, as testimony to the inner lives of the two alleged authors, would of course be drastically diminished.

The letters, and another work conventionally attributed to Kurbskii but also of disputed authenticity, *The History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* (excerpted below), touch frequently on the theme of witchcraft. In their exchanges, Ivan and Kurbskii (or pseudo-Ivan and pseudo-Kurbskii) bandied about charges of consorting with godless sorcerers, consulting diviners to try to know the future, hiring enchanters and witches to kill in pursuit of their own dark ambitions. The way the letters and the *History* dwell on the hidden threat of dark magic not only helps illuminate beliefs and terror in the precarious world of Ivan the Terrible's court; their recurrent, sharply focused anxiety about sorcery also contributes to the case for the documents' authenticity. While fear of bewitchment and its close cousin, poisoning, continue to crop up through the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, as the later selections in this chapter on "Witchcraft and Politics" make evident (see Documents 2.11–2.13), the very particular anxiety about magic at court expressed in these documents appears only in sources from the reign of Ivan IV. The obsessive focus on sorcerer-advisers who wheedle their way into the ruler's intimate circle, cloud his reason, and corrupt his rule seems characteristic of the decades just before and during the Oprichnina. Political rhetoric sharpened in this period, the cosmological stakes heightened, and writers pondered the role of man and the devil in the rise and fall of empires, and of Byzantium in particular. Sorcerers behind the scenes, and particularly in the tsar's inner council, offered logical explanations of these catastrophic events. The passages reproduced here seem very much of a piece with the other selections in this chapter, with Jerome Horsey's account (see Document 2.7) and the account from the Pskov Chronicle (see Document 2.8). They echo the account of Anna Glinskaia's rumored use of magic at the time of the Great Moscow Fire of 1547, an

account interpolated into the chronicle during Ivan's reign and perhaps on the direct instruction of Ivan himself. The quite secure dating of the interpolation further supports the idea that the tsar's thinking worked along these lines (see Document 2.5). Most particularly, both Ivan's and Kurbskii's writings draw on themes developed in Ivan Peresvetov's nightmarish fantasy about the perverse works of evil grandees, "whisperers," "wicked flatterers," and "impious destroyers of all the tsardom" (see Document 2.6). Strikingly too, for all that Ivan and Kurbskii were so much at odds in these exchanges and so eager to revile each other, they shared a unified imaginative realm in which evil stalked the Kremlin in the form of sorcerers with access to the tsar and his closest associates.

Despite the lingering and unresolved questions of authenticity, we present the Kurbskii-Ivan texts as sixteenth-century texts. In the context of magic, this dating seems the most plausible. Their particular preoccupation with sorcery at court is a characteristic specific to the reign of Ivan IV, and not of later periods.

The cast of characters here can be confusing. Aside from the chief antagonists, Tsar Ivan Vasilevich and the princely defector Andrei Kurbskii, the two main figures to keep in mind are Sylvester, a priest of the Cathedral of the Annunciation in the Kremlin, and Aleksei Adashev, a court servitor and diplomat. These two men, once apparently close to Ivan as collaborators and advisers, later figured in his imagination as something on the level of masked supervillains, lurking and casting spells from the shadows. Although their presence is only hinted at in the excerpts presented here, they receive a good share of Ivan's opprobrium in his letters. Kurbskii's letters and *History* also accentuate the role of Sylvester and Adashev, but in mirror image of the evil masterminds of Ivan's version. Kurbskii's work instead casts them as men of virtue martyred by Ivan and his loathsome sorcerer-advisers. Sylvester appears again in Chapter 3 as a likely author of the *Domostroi*, a handbook for managing affluent urban households.

Sorcery allegations from Ivan the Terrible's correspondence with Prince Kurbskii

Source: Adapted from J. L. I. Fennell, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence between Prince A. M. Kurbsky and Tsar Ivan IV of Russia, 1564–1579* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 13, 81, 83, 187, 191, 192, 193, 199, 209, 211. Brackets in the original. © 1955 by Cambridge University Press. Reprinted with the permission of Cambridge University Press.

Epistle of the tsar and sovereign to all his Russian kingdom against those that violate the oath of allegiance, against Prince Andrey Kurbsky and his comrades, concerning their treacheries

(*Ivan begins his letter with a resentful description of his impotence as a child ruler under a boyar regency. Ascending the throne at the tender age of three, the boy-ruler had to suffer the indignities of being ordered around by his own nobles and subjected to what he saw as appalling disrespect. He also charged the boyars with causing the death of his mother.*) But when we reached the fifteenth year of our life, then did we take it upon ourselves to put our kingdom in order and thanks to the mercy of God our rule began favourably. But since human sin ever (*aggravates*) the Grace of God, it came to pass that—because of our sins and the intensification of God's wrath—a fiery flame burned the ruling city of Moscow, and our treacherous boyars, who are called martyrs by you (their names will I intentionally pass over), seized the moment which appeared … favourable to their treacherous wickedness [and] incited the feeblest-witted of the people [by saying] that the mother of our mother, Princess Anna Glinsky, together with her children and her retinue, extracted human hearts and with such magic set fire to Moscow, and (*they also claimed*) that we had prior knowledge of … their (*plot*) …

Owing to the incitement of those (*treacherous boyars*), the people, … having seized in (*"Jewish"*) manner[30] our boyar, Prince Yuri Vasil'evitch Glinsky in the chapel of the holy martyr Dimitry of Salonica, and having dragged him out, inhumanly slew him in the apostolic cathedral of the Assumption of the Most Holy Mother of God opposite the throne of the metropolitan, and filled the church with his blood; and they dragged his dead body … and laid him, like one condemned [to death], in the market place. And (*everyone knows about*) … his murder in the church …, and (*it was*) not as you lyingly assert, you cur! (*Then*), while we were living in our village of Vorob'evo these traitors stirred up the people to kill us too, on the grounds that we were hiding from them the mother of Prince Yury [Glinsky], Princess Anna, and his brother Prince Mikhail. How can one help but deride such sophistries! For what reason, pray, should we ourselves be the incendiary of our own kingdom? Indeed, so many possessions—the … [blessing] of our forefathers—did we lose as could not be found again in the whole universe. Who could be so insensate or wild as to destroy his own possessions when in anger with his servants? He would burn down their

[houses], but would preserve himself. In everything is your currish treachery brought to light. And how could one sprinkle water to such a height as [the church of] St John?[31] This is indeed clear madness. And with such "well-wishing" is it befitting for our boyars and (*governors*) to serve us, (namely) by assembling like a pack of hounds without our knowledge and slaughtering our boyars—yea, and even those in … (*our*) blood line …? …

(Epistle from Ivan IV, who was in Volodimirets [Wolmar] at the time, to Prince Andrei Kurbskii)

(The letter continues Ivan's list of complaints against Kurbskii and the other boyars.)

And why did you separate me from my wife? If only you had not taken from me my young [wife], then there would have been no "sacrifices to Cronus."[32] You will say: "that I was unable to endure this [the loss of my wife] and that I did not preserve my purity"—well, we are all human. Why did you take the soldier's wife? …[33]

"Answer of the lowly Andrey Kurbsky, Prince of Kowel, to the Second Epistle of the Tsar of Moscow"

(Probably sent in the autumn of 1578 from Kowel, a castle that had previously belonged to the mother of King Sigismund Augustus of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and which the king granted him.)

And as for your writing that your tsaritsa (*Anastasia*) had been bewitched (*to death*) and that you had been separated from her by those above-mentioned men (*presumably Sylvester and Adashev*), and by me—I do not answer you for those holy men, for facts cry out, emitting a voice louder than the trumpet, concerning their holiness and virtue; but as for myself, I will answer you briefly: even if I am laden with sins and unworthy, nonetheless I was born of noble parents, of the family of the Grand Prince of Smolensk, Fedor Rostislavich, as indeed your Royal Highness knows well from the Russian chronicles, and princes of that generation are not accustomed to eat their own bodies and to drink the blood of their brothers,

as has long since been the habit of certain [other families]…. And then others too still fresh in our memory … and before our eyes. What was done to the princes of Uglich and to the Yaroslavichi and others of the same blood and how were they wiped out and destroyed in whole families? (*It*) is hard for the ears and horrible (*to hear what was done to them*)! Torn from their mothers' breasts, they were shut up in most gloomy prisons and tormented for many years—even that blessed grandson crowned by God in perpetuity! (*Here Kurbskii refers to the violent history of the Moscow dynasty, which did have a bad record of killing off potential rivals in the ruling line.*) But your tsaritsa is a close relative of me, the lowly one, as you can see that relationship on the side of this page. (*Fennell notes that most of the surviving manuscripts include an explanation of Kurbskii's genealogical connection to Tsaritsa Anastasia, whom he claims as a third cousin.*)[34]

Sorcery allegations from Prince Andrei Kurbskii's *History of the Grand Prince of Moscow*

Source: Excerpts are adapted from J. L. I. Fennell, ed. and trans., *Prince A. M. Kurbsky's History of Ivan IV* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1965), 3, 153, 155, 157, 159, 177, 179, 181, 195, 197, 199, 201, 203, 205. Brackets in the original. © 1965 by Cambridge University Press. Reproduced with permission of the Licensor through PLSclear.

While the hostilities between Ivan IV and Prince Kurbskii were expressed through rather veiled and elusive accusations of sorcery in the correspondence, in Kurbskii's *History* the theme is unleashed with a passion. The charges and countercharges fly so fast and the scheming and subterfuge run so deep that it is sometimes hard to keep track. Kurbskii accuses the tsar and his corrupt lineage of carrying the taint of sorcery across the generations. He is particularly hard on the "foreign wives," the "sorceress-wives" of Ivan III and Vasilii III, who brought witchcraft into the rulers' household. He is equally comfortable accusing Ivan himself of falling under the sway of sorcerers, of being seduced by their flattery and cunning, becoming easy prey for their satanic plots. He describes the tsar's participation in wild, drunken revelries, drinking from beakers devoted to the devil, donning the devilish masks of *skomorokhi* (minstrels) and dancing, and generally participating happily in the antiworld of sorcery. Every negative trope of sixteenth-century magic enters the picture. The tsar consults whispering witch women as well as Finns and Lapps, northern people firmly associated with witchcraft in Muscovite lore. Further, however, Kurbskii describes the ways that the tsar cagily turns sorcery charges against his foes, tarring pious, honest men and women with the brush of witchcraft. Accusations of

witchcraft appear here as the very currency of political life and maneuvers of power, an accepted, general language for discrediting the enemy, a discourse shared between bitter antagonists.

Kurbskii is clear and definitive in his assertion that without a pact with the devil, sorcerers cannot work magic: "and without agreement with, that is to say without promises to, the devil and without the denial of Christ, as I have said before, sorcerers cannot make these things work; but it is all the work of the devil on behalf of all those people, and it is planned by those above-mentioned wicked men who are in agreement with the devil." In adopting this position, Kurbskii is unique among Muscovite authors, who tend to focus on the criminal harm inflicted through magical means or who condemn magicians in general terms as devilish or pagan, but without any deep consideration of causality. Pacts with the devil remain extremely rare in Russian witchcraft throughout its history. Was Kurbskii influenced by his time in Lithuania, where he would have been exposed to Catholic witch lore, full of theories about Satanism and satanic pacts? Or was this work written not by Kurbskii but by a seventeenth-century impersonator? These questions remain unanswered. But aside from his preoccupation with a satanic and (anti)religious conception of witchcraft, he clearly shares with Ivan himself and with other Muscovite authors of the period a worldview where sorcerers can insinuate themselves into the heart of power and pervert the heart and mind of the tsar.

The History of the Grand Prince of Moscow. That which we have heard from trustworthy people and that which we have seen with our own eyes I have written down, pertinaciously importuned by many, abridging it in as far as I was able

Many times … I have been asked with great importunity by many illustrious men: "how did these things happen to the tsar who was formerly so good and distinguished, who many times for the sake of his fatherland … had no care for his own health and who in war against the enemies of the cross of Christ suffer(*ed*) grievous labour and woes and countless toil, and who formerly enjoyed good renown from all?" And many times I remained silent, sighing and weeping, for I did not wish to answer. But afterwards, because of the frequent questions, I was compelled to say at least something about such occurrences as have happened, and I answered them: if I were to speak from the beginning and [to narrate all things] in turn, there would be too much to write—about how the devil sowed evil habits among that most excellent (*lineage*) of Russian princes especially by means of their evil and sorcer(*ess*)-wives (*charodeitsy*), just as among the kings of Israel—above all those wives whom they took in marriage from foreigners (*that is, Sofia*

Palaeologue and Elena Glinskaia, wives of Ivan III and Vasilii III, respectively)….

Now what did our tsar begin to do after this (*victory in Livonia*)? When with God's help he had defended himself against his enemies on every side thanks to his brave men, then he repaid them! Then he recompensed them with extreme evil for extreme good, with ferocity for loving-kindness, with cunning and deceit for their simple and faithful service. And how did he set about this? In the following manner: firstly, he unjustly dismissed … the priest Sil'vester and Aleksey Adashev, (although they had not sinned in any way before him), and (*he opened*) his ears to … wicked flatterers … As I have already said many times, not a single deathly boil can be more pestilential in the tsardom, and who had already accused those holy men and in their absence whispered sycophancy in his ears against them—especially his brothers-in-law and other impious destroyers of all the tsardom. But why did they do this? This, in truth, is the reason: so that their wickedness should not be exposed and so that they might freely rule us all, and, perverting justice, take bribes and multiply other foul wicked deeds, thus increasing their possessions. But what accusations do they whisper in the tsar's ear? At that time the wife of the tsar died (*1560*), they said that those men (*Sylvester and Adashev*) had bewitched her. (It was as though they were accusing those good and holy men of what they themselves were skilled in and believed in.) And the tsar, being filled with (*riotousness, or* buistvo), straightaway believed them. And hearing this, Sil'vester and Adashev began to beg him, both by means of epistles and through the metropolitan of Russia, to talk to them face to face. "We do not shun death if we are guilty, but let there be open judgment before you and before all your senate (*i.e., the Boyar Council;* senat *is in the Russian*)."

And what did the wicked ones devise to counter this (*Sylvester and Adashev's appeals*)? They did not let the epistles reach the tsar; they forbade the old bishop (*Metropolitan Makarii, who was seventy-eight or seventy-nine at the time*) [to intercede] and threatened him; they said to the tsar:

> If you admit these men to your presence, they will bewitch you and your children. Furthermore, all your army and your people, who love them more than they love you yourself, will stone you

and us. Even if this does not happen, they will bind you and subject you again to themselves in servitude. Thus did these evil men and worthless sorcere(*sse*)s hold you before, as it were in chains, you, the sovereign, so great and glorious and wise, the tsar crowned by God, ordering you to eat and drink and to live with your tsaritsa in moderation, not granting you your own will in anything great or small, and not allowing you to have mercy on your people or to rule your tsardom! Had they not been with you—so courageous, so brave and so powerful a sovereign—and had they not held you as it were with a bridle, then you would have ruled almost all the universe. And this they did by their magic (*enchantments*). Closing your eyes, they did not allow you to supervise anything, for they wanted to reign themselves and to rule over us all. And if you admit them (*Sylvester and Adashev*) to your presence, then again they will bewitch … and blind you. But now that you have dismissed them, you have indeed seen reason; that is to say you have come to your senses and you have opened your eyes, freely supervising all your tsardom like the anointed of God, and no one else, but yourself alone, governs and rules it.

And thus, with countless other tissues of lies, in agreement with their father the devil—indeed, one might say that when his tongue and mouth speak, they lead to the downfall of Christianity—they deceived their man with flattering words and overthrew the soul of the Christian tsar, who was living righteously and in penitence, and thus they broke that bond which was woven by God for spiritual love…. And those accursed ones drove him away from … God. And again I say: with such deceptive words they destroyed the Christian tsar, who for many years had been good and (*who*) had been adorned with penitence and had been brought close to God, abiding in every kind of restraint and purity. O wicked men, filled with all kinds of evil and cunning, the destroyers of their fatherland, still more of all the holy Russian tsardom! What good will this bring you? Soon you shall see the result of this deed upon yourselves and upon your children, and from generations to come you shall hear an everlasting curse!

Now the tsar, having been made by the accursed ones to drink his fill of this deadly poison mixed with sweet flattery, and being filled with cunning, or rather stupidity, praised their counsel and loved them and drew them into friendship and bound them to him with oaths, taking up arms against the holy innocent men—and further … against all good men and against all who wished him well and … were ready to lay down their lives for him, as though against his enemies; and he gathered together and collected around him an exceedingly strong and great satanic host. And what did he then

embark upon and do first of all? He summoned a council, including not only all his lay senate, but also all the clergy, that is to say he called for the metropolitan and the bishops of the towns, and to these he added certain very cunning monks, Misail Sukin, who had long been renowned for his iniquities, and Vassian Besny, who was rightly named "the Mad," and others like them, filled with hypocrisy and all kinds of diabolical shamelessness and boldness; and he seated them near himself, listening to them with gratitude as they uttered false accusations against the holy men and said lawless things against the just with exceeding pride and contempt.

And what was done at that council? Having written down the charges against these men (*Sylvester and Adashev*) they read them out in their absence. But the metropolitan then said in the presence of all: "It is right that they should be brought here before us so that the charges may be brought against them in their presence, for it is indeed right that we should hear what they have to say in reply." And all the good men agreed with him and said the same thing. But those most pernicious flatterers shouted with the tsar: "It is not right, O bishop! These men are recognized evil-doers and great sorcerers, and they will bewitch the tsar and will destroy us if they come!" And so they were condemned in their absence. O judgment worthy of ridicule, still more, replete with calamity, passed by a tsar who was deceived by flatterers.

The priest Sil'vester, his confessor, was imprisoned by him and sent as far as an island in the Frozen Sea, to the monastery of Solovki in the land of the Korelian people, amongst the wild Lapps. And Aleksey was banished from his sight without judgment to the town of Fellin, which had recently been taken by us, and was governor there for a short time. But when the evil ones heard that even there God was helping him, … then again in the tsar's ears they added accusation to accusation, whisper to whisper, tissue of lies to tissue of lies against that just and good man. And straightway he ordered him to be taken away from there to Derpt and kept under guard; and two months later he fell into a fever. Having confessed and having taken the holy sacraments of Christ our God, he departed to Him. And when his accusers

heard about his death they cried into the tsar's ear: "Now your traitor has given himself deadly poison and has died." …

Soon after the death of Aleksey Adashev and the banishment of Sil'vester, a great persecution flared up and a fire of ferocity blazed in the Russian land; and indeed there had never before been such unheard-of persecution, not only in the Russian land but even at the time of the ancient pagan tsars…. This beast of ours, who has recently appeared, first of all began to proscribe the relatives of Aleksey and Sil'vester—and not only their relatives but anybody he heard about from those accusers of his—and their friends and neighbors and those who were known, however slightly, to be their friends and neighbors, and even many of those who were not recognized at all as such, were accused by them because of their wealth and possessions; and he ordered many to be seized and subjected to various forms of torture, and very many others to be banished from their estates and houses to distant towns. And why did he persecute those innocent people? Because the land cried out on behalf of those just men who had been banished in their innocence, naming and cursing those above mentioned flatterers who had seduced (*soblaznivshie*) the tsar; and he, together with them, now as it were justifying himself before all …, now on his guard against I know not what sorcery (*charovstvo*), ordered them to be tortured—not one, not two, but (*the*) whole (*population*) (narod tsel). It would be impossible to enumerate the names of all the guiltless ones who died in those tortures, there are so many of them.

At that time the venerable Maria Magdalina was put to death with her five sons. She was by birth a Pole; later she was converted to Orthodoxy. She was a great and excellent faster, many times a year eating only once a week, and to such an extent did she shine forth in her holy widowhood that she wore heavy iron chains on her venerable body, enslaving her flesh in order to subject it to the spirit…. She was accused before the tsar of having been a sorceress and a confederate of Aleksey, and so he ordered her and her children to be put to death, and many others with her, for that Aleksey was not only virtuous himself, but, as David said, the friend and companion of all them that fear the Lord and the accomplice of all them that keep His

precepts … (*H*)e (*Aleksei*) would keep scores of sick people in his house, secretly feeding them and washing them, and many a time wiping their sores with his own hands….

And at that time Prince Mikhaylo Repnin, who already held the rank of counsellor, was put to death by him. But why was he killed, for what offense? The tsar began drinking from those great beakers, pledged to the devil, which I have talked about above, with certain favorite flatterers of his and when he [Repnin] was, as it happened, summoned—for he [Ivan] wanted thereby to attach him to himself in friendship. And having drunk his fill the tsar began dancing in masks together with the *skomorokhi* (*minstrels, associated with both paganism and witchcraft*), and so did those who were feasting with him. Now when that distinguished and noble man saw this indecorum, he began to weep and to say to him: "It is not fitting for you, O Christian tsar, to do such things." But the tsar began to press him, saying: "Be cheerful and play with us," and taking a mask he started putting it on his face; but he [Repnin] threw it away and trampled on it and said: "May I not perform such indecorous and mad acts, I who am a man of the rank of counsellor!" And the tsar was filled with fury and banished him from his sight. And a few days later, on Sunday, when he was standing in church during the all-night vigil, at the time of the reading of the Gospel, the tsar ordered his inhuman and fierce soldiers to slay him as he stood near the very altar like an innocent lamb of God….

Prince Mikhail Vorotynsky, glorious among the Russian princes, was put to death (*after winning a great victory against the Crimean Tatars*)….

And how did he (*the tsar*) reward him for this service? Listen attentively, I pray you, to this tragedy, which is most bitter and piteous to the hearing. About a year after … (*the victory*), he ordered the victor and defender of him and of all the Russian land to be seized and to be led to him in chains and to be placed before him. And having found a servant of his who had robbed his master—I think he had been instructed to do so by the tsar …—the tsar said to Vorotynsky: "See, your servant bears witness against you, saying that you wanted to bewitch me and that you got whispering women (*baby shepchiushchie*) to cast a spell over me." And he answered (for the

prince had led a holy life from his youth on): "I have not learned, o tsar, nor have I received the custom from my ancestors, to practice magic and to believe in devilry; but I have learned to praise (*the*) one God, who is glorified in the Trinity, and to serve you, my sovereign, truly…."

And the tsar immediately ordered that man, who was most brilliant in birth and especially in intellect and deed, to be tied to a stake between two fires and to be burned. And they say that he himself ran up, as the chief executioner to those who were torturing the victor … (*of the battle against the Crimeans*), and with his accursed staff heaped up the burning coals under his holy body….

His [Ivan IV's] father Vasily, together with that law-breaking wife of his whom I have mentioned above (*i.e., Elena Glinskaia*), while he was old (*Vasilii was forty-six years old when he married Glinskaia*) and she was young, sought wicked magicians everywhere to help him become fertile—for he did not want his brother to be ruler after him—he had a brother Yury,[35] who was very brave and virtuous—and so he instructed his wife and his accursed advisers, ordering them to kill him soon after his death; and so he was killed. And he took such pains to get those sorceresses, sending hither and thither for them even as far as Korelia, that is to say, Finland, and as far as the wild Lapps, the tribe settled in the great hills by the Frozen Sea—and from there they brought to him those "healers," those wicked counsellors of Satan. And with their help from his most foul seed were born two sons according to wicked design and not according to divinely decreed nature: one of them was so savage and bloodthirsty and such a destroyer of his fatherland that not only in the Russian land have such strange and wondrous things never been heard of before, but in truth nowhere, I think, and at no time, for in ferocity and unmentionable foul practices he has even exceeded the evil Nero; furthermore, he was not an implacable external foe and persecutor of the Church of God, but a poisonous internal serpent, devouring and torturing the servants of God; and the other one, just as strange and wondrous, was born without mind, memory or speech.

Consider and ponder attentively, O Christian peoples, how men dare in unholy manner to get evil magicians and women, those who cast spells by

sprinkling water or by whispering, and those who bewitch with various other (*enchantments*), in order to help them and their children, communing with the devil and calling him to help—consider what advantage and what help you have in this unheard-of period of ferocity which we have been talking about! For many people, so I have often heard, consider this to be but a trifle and say laughingly: "This is a small sin and it can easily be atoned for by penitence." But I say: it is not small; indeed it is extremely great, since in this manner you are destroying the commandment of God which is great in promise: for the Lord says: "You shall not fear anybody, nor shall you serve them,"[36] that is to say: you shall have no help from anybody except from Me, "nor in heaven above, nor on earth below, nor beneath the depths";[37] and again, "whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in heaven."[38] And you, forgetting such fearsome commandments of our Lord, run to the devil, asking for him by means of sorcerers! Yet, as is known to all people, there are no spells without denial of God and without agreement with the devil. Indeed, I think that it is also an irremediable sin to hearken to sorcerers, and hard to atone for by penitence: irremediable in that you consider it to be a small sin; hard to atone for by penitence, since without Judas's betrayal of Christ, (*charms*) and (otnosy, *or talismans*),[39] and asperging (*sprinkling with holy water; a rite appropriated from the Church by magical practitioners*) [are ineffective] because of (*purification*) of the … baptismal font. So too is rubbing with salt (*associated with spell casting*), because of the oil of holy chrismation, and also foul (*magical*) whisperings because of clear promises made to Christ at holy baptism, and also charms because of offerings at the altar of the most pure Lamb—and without agreement with, that is to say without promises to, the devil and without the denial of Christ, as I have said before, sorcerers cannot make these things work; but it is all the work of the devil on behalf of all those people, and it is planned by those above-mentioned wicked men who are in agreement with the devil. May our Lord God, because of His exceedingly great grace, deliver all the Orthodox from such people! …

2.10 LOYALTY OATHS

Boris Fedorovich Godunov (1551–1605), the first tsar to be crowned after the Riurikid dynasty had died out, had to work hard to secure his unconventional and therefore rather shaky claim to the throne. Understandably nervous about resistance to his rule, he demanded an elaborate oath of loyalty from every rank of the Muscovite population. The loyalty oath, like all important oaths taken in Muscovy, were sworn on the cross, in a ritual in which the swearer would kiss the cross to guarantee his or her inviolable adherence to the terms of the oath. Hence, the term "cross-kissed oath" and references to kissing the cross appear throughout the following documents.

The oath to Godunov was not the first to mention evil as a category of concern, as we know from a 1532 oath to Vasilii III administered to the high-ranking servitor Mikhail Pleshcheev: Pleshcheev vowed that he was obliged to inform the sovereign of any information that involved "poison and any other evil whatsoever."[40] The oath to Godunov, however, is the earliest surviving loyalty oath to spell out a particular preoccupation with witchcraft as an immediate danger to the tsar and his family. It is quite possible that this language would have been included in loyalty oaths already in the reign of Ivan IV, given his evident anxiety about sorcery, but no documentation survives to support this suggestion. Worry about magical meddling arose again in late 1600, after Godunov had been seriously ill. Accusations of witchcraft and regicide were levied against the Romanov clan, the Boyar Council was purged, and the head of the clan, Fedor Nikitich, was forced to become a monk with the name Filaret.

The segment of the oath to Godunov translated below represents approximately half of the full document. The remaining portion forbade subjects of the realm from recognizing Simeon Bekbulatovich, grand prince of Tver, who had been named by Ivan IV as grand prince of All Russia between September 1575 and September 1576.[41] A quarter-century later, a rumor came to Godunov's attention that several princes and boyars had been plotting to put Bekbulatovich on the throne. The oath also prohibited subjects from supporting the tsar's foreign enemies or subjects of other royalty, including the Turks, Lithuanians, Spanish, French, Danish, Hungarian, Swedish, English, Germans, Crimean, and Nogai.

Between 1605 and 1613, Russia was shaken by a period of political and dynastic instability known as the Time of Troubles. A civil war raged within Muscovy and serious pretenders to the throne raised armies to back their claims. Among these pretenders were the infamous series of "False Dmitriis"—essentially warlords whose legitimacy was derived from their claim to be Ivan IV's already-deceased heir. In a chain of suspicion, each successive ruler lodged accusations of witchcraft and sorcery against his predecessor, weaving such accusations into the very fabric of political life. Boris Godunov, as we have already seen, accused the Romanov boyars, while his successor, the First False Dmitrii, lodged the same accusations of witchcraft against him. Dmitrii fell in turn to Vasilii Shuiskii, who labeled Dmitrii a pernicious sorcerer and subjected his corpse to the humiliation due a godless magician. His body was publicly displayed along with

the masks and musical instruments associated with minstrels, themselves condemned as devilish and sometimes associated with witchcraft.

The loyalty oath to Tsar Vasilii Shuiskii in 1606 was much shorter than the oath to Godunov. It retained a concern with witchcraft as a threat to the tsar and his family. Issued in the midst of the Time of Troubles, the loyalty oath uses language that attests to an urgent fear of conspiracies and intrigues against the throne. That fear was not misplaced as "even in Moscow, Shuiskii's enemies on the Boyar Council remained active, and new plots against him were organized within days of his coronation."[42]

At the end of the Time of Troubles and with the election of the first Romanov tsar, Mikhail Fedorovich, in 1613, the realm began to stabilize under the new reigning dynasty. By 1627, the general loyalty oath dropped any direct mention of sorcery or witchcraft, focusing instead on the requirement that servitors and subjects refrain from all plots and insurrections as well as refusing support to foreign rulers. References to sorcery and herbs, nevertheless, appeared in specialized supplemental oaths administered to servitors who held ranks below those of boyars, high-ranking courtiers, councilors, and state secretaries and who had access to the tsar's person and material objects that the tsar would use or wear.[43] The general and more specific oaths were retained in Aleksei Mikhailovich's reign (1645–76). In July and August 1645, the male population of all towns and districts, whose names were registered on lists prepared ahead of time, swore allegiance to the new tsar in front of the town's cathedral or a district church.[44]

The ladies-in-waiting of the tsaritsas of the first two Romanov tsars also made promises not to utter "evil magic words" over their mistresses' clothing, bedding, towels, and other personal items.[45] It is highly likely "that female palace attendants of other ranks would have been required to swear similar oaths, worded in relation to their specific duties or areas of expertise," but no such texts survive.[46] When Mikhail Fedorovich's linen was ready to be washed in the Moscow River, "it went under lock and key in a trunk covered by a red cloth to protect [it] against witchcraft," and it was "accompanied by a lady of the court to supervise the washing as [another] precaution against witchcraft."[47]

The greatest departure to the loyalty oath came with the promulgation of Peter the Great's Military Statute in 1716. It continued the practice of requiring a general oath that did not mention either sorcery or witchcraft but followed the oath with specific articles of faith, by which soldiers (and by implication the entire populace) were to abide. Not only do the first two of these articles deal with sorcery and witchcraft, but the very first one strikingly introduces into Russian law Western Christianity's preoccupation with the devil and devil worship as fundamental components of witchcraft and black magic. The Military Statute was based in large part on a 1683 Swedish model that had initially been drafted in 1621–22. The Swedish law itself drew much of its content from Emperor Charles V's 1532 *Constitutio Criminalis Carolina* (see Document 3.2). Consequently, language from the Carolina's article 109 regarding harmful and nonharmful sorcery and, most notably, satanic sorcery, appears in Peter's new law. The articles required particular vigilance in identifying and punishing harmful sorcery, especially as practiced among soldiers and clergy, as well as cases that threatened the royal family. An amended version of the articles relating to witchcraft and black magic appeared in the 1720 Naval Statute.

Curiously, it removed the reference to Satanism as well as the crimes of saying spells over guns and hiring magicians. The new statute linked "magic with idolatry, superstition, and blasphemy."[48] The language in the Military and Naval Statutes underscored a certain ambivalence in the laws, which allowed for the real possibility of magical practices that were free of Satanism even as they stressed the possibility of compacting with the devil. In any case, these oaths and statutes reflected anxiety about tangible harm inflicted through magical means, with or without satanic involvement. Later eighteenth-century sovereigns dropped references to witchcraft from the oaths administered to their subjects.

Loyalty oath for Tsar Boris Godunov (September 15, 1598)

Source: *Akty, sobrannyia v bibliotekakh i arkhivakh rossiiskoi imperii arkheograficheskoiu ekspeditsieiu, dopolneny i izdany vysochaishe uchrezhdennoiu kommissieiu* (AAE) (St. Petersburg: Tip. 2 Otdeleniia sobstvennoi E.I.V. Kantseliarii, 1836), 2, no. 10: 57–61.

I kiss the cross in loyalty to the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich, Autocrat of All Russia, and his Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Maria[49] and their children, Tsarevich Fedor and Tsarevna Oksinia and those children that God will bestow upon the sovereigns, and I am bound to the following: with the Lord's holy judgment, the great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Fedor Ivanovich, Autocrat of All Russia, departed this earthly realm and is passing into eternal bliss in the heavenly kingdom, and the Sovereign Tsaritsa and Grand Princess, the nun Aleksandra Fedorovna of All Russia (*the widowed tsaritsa had taken religious vows and was known by her new monastic name*), the Most Holy Patriarch Iov of Moscow and All Russia,[50] and the metropolitans, and the archbishops, and bishops, and archimandrites, with the entire blessed church council, and all the boyars, and princes, and servitors, and chancellery people, and high-ranking officials, and petty gentry of all of the towns of the Muscovite realm, and the multitudes of people throughout the land are "beating their foreheads" (*bowing with their foreheads to the ground—the conventional mode of supplication and petition*) and sobbing and with many mighty entreaties and tears, many times, so that the [former] Sovereign Tsaritsa and Grand Princess, the nun Aleksandra Fedorovna of All Russia, would bestow the Muscovite tsardom and all of the states of the Russian tsardom upon the

brother-in-law of the Sovereign and Grand Prince Fedor Ivanovich of All Russia, her brother, Boris Fedorovich …

And I am bound by this kiss on the cross to serve the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia faithfully, and also to serve his Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Maria, and their children, the Sovereigns Tsarevich Fedor and Tsarevna Oksinia and any other children that God will bestow upon the sovereigns, and to wish the sovereigns good in everything and in their lands, by the order of the Sovereign Tsaritsa and Grand Princess, the nun Aleksandra Fedorovna of All Russia, who ordered us truthfully and faithfully to serve her brother and our Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia, and his tsaritsa, and their children for all my life. Besides that, by the kiss on the cross I am bound to desire good and truth in everything, without any type of subterfuge, for the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia, and his tsaritsa, and their children, and any children that God will bestow upon the sovereigns; and I will not wish upon or conceive of or think or conduct any kind of evil with any type of subterfuge against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia, and his tsaritsa, and their children, and any children that God will bestow upon the sovereigns. Also I am bound not to commit any kind of evil against or taint by magical means the food or drink, the clothing, and anything else belonging to the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia, and the Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Maria, and their children, Tsarevich Fedor and Tsarevna Oksinia, or give them noxious herbs and roots, or order anyone to give them noxious herbs and roots; and if someone tries to give me noxious herbs and roots or says that he wants to commit some type of evil against or bewitchment of the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia and the tsaritsa and their children, I am bound not to listen to that person nor take noxious herbs and roots from that person; and I am also bound not to dispatch people under my authority with any noxious herbs and roots and or procure sorcerers and sorceresses for any type of malevolence against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia and the tsaritsa, and the tsarevich and the tsarevna (*the tsar's*

son and daughter). And by this kiss on the cross I am also bound not to bewitch the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia and his tsaritsa and their children by tracing their footprints with any type of sorcery or have people under my authority dispatch any malevolence through the wind or trace their footprints whatsoever with subterfuge of any kind. And when the Sovereign and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia and his Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Maria and their children, Tsarevich Fedor and Tsarevna Oksinia, travel or walk anywhere, I am bound not to trace their footprints with magical means or plot or do anything evil and by means of sorcery with subterfuge of any kind. And if I have knowledge of anyone wanting to plot or carry out an act of sorcery, I am bound to inform the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia, or his boyars or people close to him, and not keep anything secret but rather I am bound to tell the truth without any type of subterfuge; if I notice anyone or hear from other quarters that some person is beginning to think or plot such a malevolent act or any kind of evil against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia and his tsaritsa and their children or is thinking of bewitching the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia and his tsaritsa and their children with roots and noxious herbs, I am bound by this kiss on the cross to apprehend that person and bring him before the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia, or his boyars or people close to him, with complete truth and without any type of subterfuge; I am bound not to keep anything secret whatsoever nor use any subterfuge; and if I am unable to apprehend that person, I am bound by this kiss on the cross to inform the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Boris Fedorovich of All Russia, or his boyars or people close to him….

Loyalty oath for Tsar Vasilii Shuiskii (1606)

Source: *AAE*, 2:102–3.

I kiss the cross in loyalty to the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich, Autocrat of All Russia, and his Tsaritsa and Grand Princess

Maria and the children which God will bestow upon the sovereigns, and I am bound to the following: I am to serve the sovereign faithfully and desire good and truth in everything without any type of subterfuge. I will not wish upon or conceive of or think or conduct any kind of evil with any type of subterfuge against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich of All Russia, and I am bound not to commit any kind of evil against or taint by magical means his food or drink, clothing, or anything else, nor to administer noxious herbs and roots. And if someone says that he wants to commit some type of evil against the sovereigns, I am not to listen to that person nor take noxious herbs and roots from him, and I should apprehend that person and then I am to inform the sovereign or people close to him about him. And if I am unable to apprehend him by any means I am bound to tell the sovereign about that person. Also, apart from the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich of All Russia, I am bound not to seek out or desire another state's sovereign or anyone close to him to govern the Muscovite state or even to think this, and I am bound not to betray the sovereign in anything. And I am bound not to deal with traitors who do not wish to serve him and who begin the process of betraying him, nor with their relatives and advisers about anything evil by letter or by any other means. And I am bound not to betray the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich of All Russia in anything, or to intrigue against the state under the sovereign or be involved in conspiracies and sedition and plots against anyone. And I am bound not to take revenge against any of my enemies or kill anyone without the sovereign's consent. And if I have knowledge of someone involved in a plot or someone who has expressed premeditated evil against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich, I am bound to defend the sovereign and to beat the people involved in that plot and every type of premeditated evil and traitors to death. I am also bound not to abandon the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Vasilii Ivanovich for another state or betray the sovereign in anything, anything whatsoever, or in any way at all.

Loyalty oaths for Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich (1627)

Source: "Zapisnaia kniga moskovskogo stola, 1626–1627 g.," *Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, vol. 9: A. Prikhodo-raskhodnyia knigi*

kazennago prikaza. B. Zapisnyia knigi Moskovskago stola (St. Petersburg: Arkheograficheskaia kommissiia, 1884), 516–20.

General oath

I, So-and-so, kiss the cross in loyalty to the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia and his Tsaritsa and Grand Princess Evdokia Lukianovna[51] and their royal children which God will bestow upon them, and am bound to the following: I am to serve the sovereign faithfully and desire good and truth in everything without any type of subterfuge, and I am to protect the sovereign's health in all circumstances, and am not to wish any kind of evil toward the sovereign, and apart from the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich, Autocrat of All Russia, I am not to seek out another sovereign from the dominions belonging to the Lithuanian and Germanic kings and their heirs, or anyone from among the Russian families and the various appanages of the tsars and their heirs for the Vladimir and Muscovite dominion (*gosudarstvo*) and all of the great dominions (*gosudarstva*) of the Russian tsardom. And when I observe or hear about plots of insurrection or sedition or other evil thoughts against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia, I shall fight such people on behalf of the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia and shall bring might to bear upon them; and having captured them, I shall bring them before the sovereign, but in some cases I will capture such people with means other than might, and I shall inform either the sovereign or the sovereign's boyars and people close to him of that plot of insurrection or sedition. And wherever the sovereign orders me to serve, I will serve the sovereign and fight his enemies from among the Crimean and Nogai and Lithuanian and Germanic peoples on behalf of the sovereign, not sparing my head, to the death. And I will not travel to Crimea and Lithuania and to the Germans or any other states, and I will not depart from towns or abandon my regiments and commissions without the sovereign's orders and leave, nor will I abandon or surrender towns, or desert military commanders, or have contact with any traitors to the sovereign, or be tempted by any kind of deception, or betray the sovereign by any means or with any type of subterfuge. And if someone appears not to be serving the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail

Fedorovich of All Russia faithfully or if someone has contact with traitors or with Tatars or Lithuanians or Germans, I am to fight such people to the death on behalf of the sovereign and his realm, and I myself am not to indulge in any type of treachery or villainy or participate in any kind of villainous deception, but rather I am to serve the sovereign faithfully in all matters by this kiss on the cross. I am also not to conspire or rebel against anyone or rob or kill someone or do anything evil against anyone without authorization.

More specific oaths depending on a servitor's personal service to the tsar

Court servitors most intimately involved with the tsar's person—with his clothing, food, tableware, and horses—were required to take additional oaths binding them to refrain from bewitching the sovereign and his family with enchanted roots and grasses. Other high-ranking courtiers such as boyars, councilors, and state secretaries also had to take an additional oath but the variants of the oaths administered to them did not include language pointing to evil, grasses, and roots. Note the extraordinary degree of specificity about the particular sites of vulnerability imagined in these oaths. Muscovite magic was understood to act most effectively through close proximity—hence the emphasis on intimate access and intimate spaces—and by proxy, through use of articles of clothing or physical traces such as footprints that had come in contact with the target. With their retinues of servants and courtiers, the tsars rendered themselves vulnerable to magical attack. This explains the preoccupation of the oaths with particular sites of tangible contact with the bodies of the sovereigns and their families.

Oath of the attendants of the royal table (stol'niki)

And as the sovereign has ordered me, So-and-so, to serve the sovereign at his table, I, being at the table, am bound by this kiss on the cross to serve the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia faithfully and not to taint his food and drink by magical means and not to put noxious herbs and roots in anything, and I am bound not to commit or order anyone to commit any kind of malevolence or evil against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia.

Oath of the keepers of the royal wardrobe (striapchie, also referred to as adjutants)

And as the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia has bestowed upon me the favor of and ordered me, So-and-so, to serve in the sovereign's wardrobe, I am bound by this kiss on the cross not to commit any type of evil against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia nor to put noxious herbs and roots in his clothing or in any of his effects, and not to order someone other than myself to put noxious herbs and roots in anything. And whenever I observe or overhear anything evil against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia on the part of someone, I am bound to tell the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia the truth, without any subterfuge, and I will not keep it secret under any conditions, and I will not be silent. I am also bound not to profit through the sovereign's business and I am bound to protect the sovereign's coffers in all circumstances.

Oath of the secretaries of the treasury (kazennye)

And as the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia has bestowed upon me the favor of and ordered me, So-and-so, to be in the chancellery in the sovereign's coffers in the Palace of the Treasury, I, being in the midst of the sovereign's affairs, am bound by this kiss on the cross to serve the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia, and not to put or order anyone else to place any noxious herbs and roots in his clothing and velvets and damasks and gold and silver and silks and any other clothing or linens or anything else; I am bound not to bewitch the sovereign with anything, and I am bound to protect all of his royal coffers, and I myself am not to profit from or steal from his royal coffers or lend anything to anyone and I am to act without any kind of subterfuge. And I am to adjudge all the people in the Palace of the Treasury on the basis of truth without any kind of subterfuge, and not favor friends, or take revenge on a foe, or take bribes and tokens from anyone for anything. By this kiss on the cross I am bound to serve the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia faithfully and wish him only good without any subterfuge.

Loyalty Oaths to Aleksei Mikhailovich (1646–47)

Source: "Zapisnaia kniga moskovskago stola, 1646–1647 g.," in Russkaia istoricheskaia biblioteka, vol. 10: *Zapisnyia knigi Moskovskago stola 1636–1663 g.* (St. Petersburg: Arkheograficheskaia kommissiia, 1886), 315–19.

(The following oaths are to specific servitors [beyond those mentioned above]).

Oath of the royal carver (kravchei; official in charge of food and provisions for the tsar)

And the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia ordered me, So-and-so, to be in the presence of the tsar in the carvery, and when I, So-and-so, am attending to the sovereign's affairs, I am bound by this kiss on the cross to protect the sovereign's health in all circumstances and not to taint the sovereign's food and drink with anything by magical means, and I am bound not to give or order anyone from any other quarter to give the sovereign anything with noxious herbs and roots and not to commit any type of evil against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia by any means and any kind of subterfuge. And if I hear or notice something evil or some evil thought or bewitchment against the sovereign, I am bound to inform the sovereign without any kind of subterfuge. Similarly, I am bound not to tell anyone of the sovereign's secret thoughts and to divulge the sovereign's thoughts by any means, and I am bound to protect the sovereign's gold and silver vessels and all of the sovereign's treasures, and not take anything from the sovereign's property or give anyone anything from the sovereign's property, and I am bound to serve the Sovereign Tsar and Great Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia faithfully.

Oath of the attendant of the bedchamber (postel'nichii)

And the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia ordered me, So-and-so, to be in the presence of the tsar in the bedchambers, and when I, So-and-so, am in the bedchambers I am bound by this kiss on the cross to serve the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia faithfully and to protect the sovereign's

health in all circumstances, and I am bound not to divulge the sovereign's thoughts to anyone prior to his issuing sovereign decrees, and I am bound to desire him good in all things for all my life, and not to commit any type of evil against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia by any means and I am bound not to do anything malevolent to the sovereign's clothing and beds and the bolsters (*which could be placed under the head or on the back of a chair*) and the pillows and linens or other bedding and not to put noxious herbs and roots in anything, and not to order anyone to put them anywhere; I am bound to protect him faithfully in all circumstances. And when I observe someone or from some other quarter hear that someone is plotting something evil against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia, I am bound to tell the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia the truth, without any subterfuge whatsoever, and I am bound not to hide anything or keep any matters secret … I am bound to undertake nothing false against anyone and to protect the sovereign's coffers faithfully and I myself am not to profit in any way from the sovereign's coffers, and I am not to give anyone anything without the sovereign's knowledge.

Oath of the attendants of the royal stables (iasel'nichie and koniushennye diaki)

And the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia has bestowed favor upon me and ordered me, So-and-so, to be in his royal stables and by this kiss on the cross I am bound to protect the health of the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia in all circumstances and not to put noxious herbs or roots in the sovereign's saddles, bridles, strips of felt, gloves, riding crops, fringe and other decorations for a horse's mane and mask, carriages, sleighs, the felt pieces in the sleigh, the carpet and chamber pot, and all of the sovereign's various pieces of stable and equestrian attire, the argamaks' (*Central Asian breed of horse*), horses', geldings', and amblers' manes or tails, or order anyone from the stable ranks or anyone else to do so;[52] and I am bound not to commit any type of evil or sorcery against the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia or any subterfuge. Also with this kiss on the cross I am bound to guard faithfully all of the sovereign's saddles, and

fringe, and other decorations for a horse's mane, and masks, and carpets, and chamber pots, and gloves, and riding crops, and carriages, and sleds, and all the sovereign's various pieces of stable and equestrian attire, and protect the various ranks of the Chancellery of the Stable against outsiders, his stable's treasures; and I am bound not to allow outsiders to access the attire, and I myself am bound not to profit at all from the sovereign's treasures, and without the sovereign's order I am not to give anyone any of the stable's treasures and horses; and I am bound to observe all of the groomsmen, people working with the stirrups, and the monthly paid workers and the herders and artisans and guard against all types of evil without any subterfuge; and I am bound to do the sovereign's bidding in all things and to adjudge all of the people in the Chancellery of the Stable and outsiders on the basis of truth without any kind of subterfuge, and not to favor friends, or take revenge on foes, or take bribes and tokens from anyone for anything.

Loyalty oath to Tsar Peter I

Source: *PSZ*, vol. 5, no. 3006.

Note that Peter's formulation includes sections of "interpretation" which explain the reasons for his innovations and point toward expected outcomes. This didacticism constituted one of the novelties that Peter introduced into his law-giving practice. The interpretation passages are thus part of the original text.

Peter I's Military Statute, April 26, 1716

Every soldier, regardless of rank, must take the following oath on the Gospels:

> I So-and-so pledge to Almighty God to serve our Most Blessed Tsar and Sovereign faithfully and obediently and to uphold all of these stipulated military articles and those expressed henceforth and carry all of them out dutifully. I will put up brave and strong resistance against the enemies of the sovereign tsar's state and lands with my body and blood on the battlefield and in fortresses, on water and land, in battles, skirmishes, sieges, assaults, and other military circumstances, for which there are no specific terms, and will endeavor to harm them with all means at my disposal. And should I see or hear anything threatening and suspicious to the person of the sovereign, or his armies, or the people of the state, or the state interest, I promise,

according to the best of my conscience and how much is known to me, to inform about it and not keep anything to myself; but all the more I will act only in his interests and to better protect him and carry out my pledge. And while in the guards, on duty, and in similar circumstances I am to render the required obedience to the commanders placed over me in all matters concerning the well-being and betterment of his sovereign majesty's armies, the state, and its people and not oppose their commands whatsoever. I am never to absent myself from the unit and standard to which I belong, whether on the battlefield, in the supply lines, or on garrison duty. And in everything, I am to act as behooves an honorable, loyal, obedient, brave, and attentive soldier. In this may the Almighty Lord God help me!

Chapter One—The Fear of God

Article 1. Even though everyone in general and every Christian without exception is required to live in a Christian manner, honorably and not to feign the fear of God, these soldiers and military people have to respect and to heed it with greater zeal, because God appointed them to a station in life, in which they frequently find that there is not one hour where they are not exposed to the greatest danger to their lives while in the sovereign's service. Because every blessing, victory, and form of well-being proceeds from the one and only all-powerful God, as the true source of all good and righteous victory, it is necessary to pray only to Him and to put faith in Him, and in particular to observe this in all matters and undertakings, and always to uphold good. For the sake of this, all idol worshipping, magic (*charodeistvo*), that is the black arts (*chernoknizhestvo*) are strictly forbidden, and thus, none of them will ever be permitted and tolerated in a military camp or anywhere else. If any soldier is found to be an idol worshipper, black magician, gun charmer, or superstitious and blasphemous sorcerer, depending on the nature of the offense he shall be placed under close arrest, put in irons, made to run the gauntlet, or be burned to death.

Interpretation: Death by burning is to be the normal punishment for black magicians if they have harmed anyone by magic, or have actually bound themselves to the devil. If he has not harmed anyone or not had any dealings with Satan, then he should be punished by one of the other punishments listed above, and made to do public church penance.

Article 2: Anyone who buys the services of a sorcerer or persuades him to commit evil against someone else, that person will be punished in the same

manner as the sorcerer.

Interpretation: When someone commits something through a second person, he is considered to have committed it himself.

2.11 GRIGORII KOTOSHIKHIN AND SAMUEL COLLINS ON THE ALLEGED POISONING OR BEWITCHMENT OF TSAR ALEKSEI MIKHAILOVICH'S FIRST BETROTHED, AND ON BEWITCHMENT AT WEDDINGS (1647)

Concern about bewitchment of brides continued to cast a shadow over the joy of marriages, royal or otherwise. Grooms too were considered vulnerable to witches' curses at the liminal moment of weddings, when they transitioned from a state of bachelorhood to a married condition. The two men whose accounts we excerpt here observed this anxiety and its effects throughout Muscovite society and reported on the steps that families took to protect their offspring from wedding-destroying magic or to undo the dire effects of such bewitchment once it had occurred. Both accounts describe the alleged poisoning or bewitchment of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's betrothed, Efimia Fedorovna Vsevolozhskaia, by scheming rivals from other elite boyar clans.[53] The tsar's first choice of bride, selected according to custom by the tsar himself out of the lineup of beauties at a bride-show, mysteriously sickened soon after her engagement was announced and was declared unfit to bear the tsar the royal heirs he needed. Disqualified from royal marriage and exiled from court, she recovered just as mysteriously as she had fallen ill. The two accounts match up nicely and show how clan politics played out through the high-stakes royal marriage game, a pattern that we have already encountered in earlier reigns (see Documents 2.1–2.3, 2.5, and 2.9). These tsarist weddings were undoubtedly political alliances, and any threat to the successful consummation of those marriages would surely constitute a political threat.

At the same time, to continue our probing of the category of "the political," both authors situate their discussions of tsarist weddings in a broader context of Muscovite wedding practices up and down the social ladder. Samuel Collins in particular emphasizes that precisely the same anxieties about sorcerers' curses afflicting brides and grooms pervaded the atmosphere of more ordinary weddings. He describes a distraught groom "tearing his hair as though he had been mad" after a witch had "tied Codpiece-point," that is, rendered him flaccid, impotent. Court trials throughout the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries confirm that this fear continued to bedevil Russian grooms, and ethnographers reported the same anxieties circulating in peasant villages into the early twentieth century. As late as the nineteenth century, it was common practice to hire a sorcerer or invite one to one's wedding in order to keep him "on your side" and to fend off the intrusions of hostile witches. (The "Sleeping Beauty" story, with the curse of the witch who was offended by not being invited to the princess's christening, reflects similar anxieties and practices at play in early modern Western Europe.) Witchcraft and weddings, therefore, kept company even in the lowest social milieus, and whatever politics involved were inflected with prosaic concerns about marriage, sex, and procreation.

These two pieces pair nicely. The Englishman Samuel Collins (1619–1670) earned a medical degree in Padua and then served for nine years (1659–66) as personal physician to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. On his return to England he wrote up his impressions in a valuable and insightful work, *The Present State of Russia*, published in 1667. It remains one of the most informative and dispassionate accounts of the seventeenth century.

Collins's contemporary, the Muscovite Grigorii Karpovich Kotoshikhin (c. 1630–1667), worked his way up through administrative ranks as a clerk in the Ambassadorial Chancellery in Moscow. In 1664, he defected and made his way to Stockholm where he penned a description of his former country for the Swedish king. Never published until 1840, the manuscript, *On Russia during the Reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich*, offers a rare account by a Muscovite insider directing his writing to an audience of foreigners. Unlike a source produced for people within the Muscovite system, Kotoshikhin's account aspired to explain the inner workings of Russia and to make them explicit and comprehensible to outsiders.

It is noteworthy that Kotoshikhin opens his survey with a discussion of marriages. Chapter 1 of his manuscript is titled "On the Tsars and Tsaritsas and Tsareviches and Tsarevnas and on the Tsar's Wedding, How It Is Celebrated." Presumably he chose to put the most important keys to understanding Muscovite political and social order right at the start, which clues us in to the critical significance of marriage in the politics of the time. Witchcraft inevitably enters the story. Poison and magical potions were not sharply differentiated in Muscovite writing or law, so behind this suspected poisoning Kotoshikhin, like Collins, suggests the specter of witchcraft.

Note that Kotoshikhin describes the tsar's selection of his second-choice bride as a case of spontaneous attraction, whereas Collins discerns an underhanded, premeditated maneuver by Boris Morozov, the tsar's adviser, to push a plan that would link him to the royal family through marriage to a pair of sisters.

A further detail in Kotoshikhin's account underscores the concern about newlyweds' susceptibility to bewitchment: on the morning following the royal wedding, friends and relatives are gathered to confirm that the "good thing" has taken place in the royal bedchamber, and then the sheets and clothing are hastily removed and hidden, to keep them secure from magical tampering.

Grigorii Kotoshikhin on the fate of Tsar Aleksei's betrothed, and on his successful marriage to Maria Miloslavskaia

Source: Grigorii Karpovich Kotoshikhin, *Russia in the Reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich*, trans. Benjamin Phillip Uroff, ed. Marshall Poe (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2014), 32–33, 38. https://doi/org/10.2478/9788376560656.3. Brackets in the original.
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The tsar took counsel with the patriarch, and spoke with the hierarchs and boyars and Duma men about entering into lawful wedlock; and the patriarch and hierarchs gave their blessing to such a goodly act as joining together in lawful love, and the boyars and Duma men gave their assent. And the tsar learned that one of his closest men had a daughter, a maiden of worthy stature and beauty and of excellent reason, and ordered her to be taken to his palace and placed in the care of his sisters, the tsarevnas, and given the same honors as his sisters the tsarevnas, until such time as the celebration of the festivities take place.

But from time immemorial the wily devil has sowed his tares in the Russian land: so that once a man has attained even a small degree of glory and honor and riches he is sure to be hated. Some of the [other] boyars and closest men [also] had daughters, but the tsar did not think of marrying any one of them. And those maidens' mothers and sisters, who lived in the tsarevnas' apartments, were jealous of this and schemed to do something to be rid of the chosen tsarevna, in the hope that the tsar would then take to himself the daughter of some other great boyar or closest man; and soon they accomplished this by poisoning her.

The tsar was greatly saddened by this and took no food for many days, and afterwards thought no more of high-born maidens, for he realized that it had happened because of malice and envy.

And some time later he happened to be in the church where he was crowned and saw the two daughters of a certain Moscow nobleman [*dvorianin*], Il'ia Miloslavskii, standing in church at prayer, and sent to his palace for some maidens and ordered to take the younger daughter of that

nobleman [*dvorianin*] to his upper chambers; and when the service was over the tsar came to his chambers, looked at her and became enamored, and designated her as his tsarevna, and entrusted her care to his sisters, and attired her in royal garments, and assigned trustworthy and God-fearing women to protect her until the hour of the wedding should come.

(This time the wedding transpired without incident, and following the ceremony and festivities, the royal couple retired to the bedchamber.)

And on the morning of the [next] day, various bathing-chambers are prepared for the tsar and tsaritsa, and the tsar goes to the bath-chamber together with a groomsman [*druzhka*] and a lord chamberlain, and when the tsar comes out of the bath-chamber he is dressed in a new shirt and drawers and garments, and the chamberlain is ordered to take the old shirt for safekeeping; and afterwards the tsar attends matins, while the tsaritsa is in her bath; and when she is arrayed in her garments, the boyars at that time gather together in the tsar's palace. And when the tsaritsa goes to the bath-chamber, she is accompanied by her mother and other closest women and a bridesmaid [*svakha*], who examines her shift; and after examining the shift, they show it to the tsar's mother and to a few other female relatives, to determine that her maidenhood had been preserved intact; and those shirts, the tsar's and the tsaritsa's, and the sheets are gathered together and held in a secret place for safekeeping, until the nuptials are over …

Samuel Collins describes the general fear of bewitchment at Muscovite weddings and recounts the events surrounding the tsar's first and second efforts to marry

Source: Samuel Collins, *The Present State of Russia*. London, 1671. Introduced and edited by Marshall Poe, 2008, 18–19, 58. https://ir.uiowa.edu/history_pubs/1/. We are indebted to Marshall Poe for putting his edition in the public domain.

Seldom a Wedding passes without some witch-craft (if people of quality marry) chiefly acted as tis thought by Nuns, whose prime devotion tends that way. I saw a fellow coming out of the Bride-chamber, tearing his hair as

though he had been mad, and being demanded the reason why he did so, he cry'd out: I am undone: I am bewitch'd: The remedy they use, is to address themselves to a white Witch, who for money will unveil the Charm, and untie the Codpiece-point, which was this young man's case; it seems some old Woman had tyed up his Cod piece-point. The Ecclesiastical law commands their abstinence from Venery three days a week, viz, Monday, Wednesday, Friday. After coition they must bath[e] before they enter the Church. A man that marries a second Wife is debar'd the Church, but not the Church porch: If a third the Communion. If a man thinks his wife barren he will perswade Her to turn Nun, that he may try another; if she refuses he Cudgel her into a Monastery. If the Empress had not brought a second Caroidg (*i.e., Tsarevich*) or Prince, borne 2 June. 1661, [a]fter four Girls together, 'tis thought she would have been sent to her Devotions.

His Imperial Majesty intending to marry, had divers young Ladies brought before him at last he liked one (which they say is very beautiful still) but his chief Confessor had a mind to perswade him to another, who had an younger Sister, so when this fair Lady was brought, they found his Majesties inclinations so strong for her, as they fear'd she would get the Crown, and indeed so she did, it being a Ceremony, upon his liking, to tye the Crown upon her head, but the plot was so laid, that the Women should tye up her hair so hard as to put her into a Swoon, which they did, crying out that she had the Falling-sickness: Upon this her Father was accused of Treason for proposing his Daughter, whip't, and sent with disgrace into *Syberia*, where he died. The Maid remains still a Virgin, and never had any fit since. The Emperor being conscious of the wrong he had done her, allows her a very great Pension.

(Later Collins implicates the boyar Boris Ivanovich Morozov, the highest magnate of the realm and the tsar's adviser, as having been behind the plot.)

Morozov preferred his own candidate as royal bride: the daughter of a minor nobleman named Ilia Danilovich Miloslavskii (*rendered in Collins's tortured Russian as Eliah Daneloidg*). After getting Vsevolozhskaia out of the way, Morozov successfully persuaded the tsar to marry Maria (*here, Mary*) Miloslavskaia, and took Maria's sister as his own wife, thereby cementing his primacy at court by becoming the tsar's brother-in-law.

(Referring to Vsevolozhskaia in the aftermath of the attack upon her, Collins writes:)

The Czar being to take a Wife, all the choice beauties in the Country are brought before him, one he fancies, and gives he a Handkerchief and Ring (*tokens of the betrothal*), she appears again in a Royal dress; but Boris (*Morozov*) ordered the crown to be tyed so hard about her head, that she fell into a swoon, this was presently construed an Epileptick fit; her Father being examined with torments, was, alas poor old Gentleman, sent into Syberia, and died by the way with grief, and left his Family in disgrace. The maid is still alive, but never known to have had any more fits. She has been offer'd many Noblemen, but refuses all, and keeps the Handkerchief and Ring. The Czar allows her a pension to expiate the injury done to her Father and Family.

Boris (*Morozov*) proposed Mary (*Maria*) the Daughter of Eliah Daneloidg (*Miloslavskii*) of obscure Gentility, rais'd by the death of his Uncle Grammatine the Chancellor of the Embassadors Office, to whom he fill'd wine in his minority, The present Ctzaritsa … was a tolerable beauty adorn'd with the precious jewels of modesty, industry and religion. She was married privately for fear of Witch-craft, which is here common at Nuptials. Boris petitioned for (*Mary's*) younger Sister Anna, and obtain'd her, and from thence concluded his interest well rivetted. But the Lady was not so well pleas'd with him being an old Widdower, and she a succulent black young Lass; so instead of children jealousie were got.

2.12 HETMAN IVAN BRIUKHOVETSKII'S BURNING OF WITCHES (1666)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Belgorodskii stol, stlb. 596, l. 35; N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Koldovstvo v Moskovskoi Rusi XVII veka* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Al'tshulera, 1906), no. 24, 94.

Ivan Martinovich Briukhovetskii/Martynovych Briukhovetskyi was elected ataman (leader) of the Ukrainian Zaporozhian Host in 1661, and from that powerful position was elected hetman (commander) of Left-Bank Ukraine in 1663. According to the Articles of 1665, he placed the Left Bank under the direct authority of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, in return for which Briukhovetskii retained his political position, earned the status of boyar, received lands in accordance with that title, and wedded Princess Daria Dmitrievna Dolgorukaia. The Dolgorukiis were a distinguished Muscovite boyar clan. Briukhovetskii's unqualified support for the Muscovite tsar, however, earned the displeasure of many Cossacks in his ranks, leading to outright rebellion. It was in the midst of this discontent that an insecure Briukhovetskii ordered the burning of witches, whom he suspected of making himself and his new wife ill and his spouse barren. The surviving documentation on this case consists of just the following short denunciation, but it is of exceptional interest. The burning of suspected witches without trial made this a highly unusual instance of quasi- or extralegal witch hunting in the Ukrainian and Russian lands.

What, precisely, would have constituted "legal" witch hunting in Left-Bank Ukraine at this moment in history? This turns out to be a harder question to answer than one might think. Since the area had only very recently switched political allegiances and come under Muscovite rule, its legal situation was understandably a bit unclear. In principle, the newly incorporated Ukrainian territories were to maintain their previous legal systems: that is, for this region, Magdeburg Law, the *Carolina* (see Documents 3.2 and 3.3), and either the 1566 or 1588 version of the Lithuanian Statute. If either the *Carolina* or Magdeburg Law served as the relevant legal statutes by which witches (or any other cases) should have been tried, then the legality of Briukhovetskii's process would have received mixed grades. According to both, burning was an appropriate punishment for convicted witches, so he would have passed muster there; but in order to convict a witch, or any other offender, both legal codes required that a full court hear the case and conduct a lawful interrogation (with torture). Any death penalty for witchcraft, which was only occasionally levied, could be appealed. In Briukhovetskii's "court," he seems to have acted entirely on his own, without authorizing any formal legal investigation. In terms of the *Carolina* and Magdeburg Law, then, his high-handed action was clearly illegal. The Lithuanian Statutes, however, provided little guidance on the procedure for trying and punishing witches, so it would have established a less definitive standard for judging his conduct.

But of course, as we have noted, the Zaporozhian Host and the territory of the Left Bank had come under Muscovite rule the previous year, so perhaps the hetman felt justified in ignoring the constraints of Magdeburg Law and adopting Muscovite legal process. How would he rate according to Muscovite practice? Here too, his grades might be somewhat mixed. It is true that Muscovy conceived of no separation of powers: what we might call executive and judicial branches were not distinct, and a single man would hold them both. A governor or vicegerent would be appointed by the tsar to rule in his place in a locality, and he would serve as prosecutor, interrogator, and sentencing judge. There was no concept of a lawyer for the defense. So it would appear that Briukhovetskii might have been within his rights to act singlehandedly in this case, if he opted to follow Muscovite law. But in fact, even in Muscovy, the tsar's agents were limited by process. According to

law and regulation, they had to conduct full, truthful, and unbiased investigations in collaboration with their assistants (called "comrades," *tovarishchi*, in the documents), and, most importantly, they were obliged to send those reports to Moscow for approval at each step, before action could be taken. By Muscovite standards too, Briukhovetskii had crossed the line.

These may seem like purely academic puzzles, figuring out the fine points of legality, when it is clear the hetman felt confident enough to act exactly as he wished, without constraint of either legal structure. However, his violations did not go unnoticed. The only reason we know about this extralegal witch burning is that one of his subordinates blew the whistle and filed the following report on his boss's exercise in arbitrary justice. Apparently, the report did not suffice to end Briukhovetskii's career, but he did not survive for long in any case.

Identified by his men with what they saw as his selling out to Moscow, the hetman tried to squash discontent among his Cossacks by switching allegiances once again and turning against the Muscovite tsar. His about-face proved to be too little too late: in 1668, he fell victim to a brutal Cossack assault. Briukhovetskii's extralegal violence against suspected witches was ironically met with another form of extralegal violence.

Briukhovetskii's violent treatment of these supposed witches suggests that he shared the same framework of fear that characterized cases of "political sorcery" at the highest level of Muscovite rule. The hetman's response to perceived magical attacks on himself and his family, and particularly his reproductive capacities, straddles the boundary between political and personal or, more accurately, underscores once again the meaninglessness of positing such a boundary in early modern Muscovy or Ukraine. He recapitulates at a lower level of authority the logic we have already seen among grand princes and tsars, a logic that defined any attack on the person or family of the ruler—whether meddling with his love life or winning his favor at court—as an act of treason. The personal and the political were inseparably linked.

While this Ukrainian case echoes themes already familiar from the Muscovite sources, the mysterious cats and mice that run out of the suspects' cell in the document below suggest an interesting influx of more European notions about witchcraft, presumably introduced through proximity to Polish and Lithuanian models. The oddly behaved creatures recall the demonic animal "familiars" that served witches in English and occasionally Continental witchcraft lore, revealing an interesting intersection of Muscovite and European patterns.

September 30, 1666. Ioana Gavrilov Leontev said: When I was with Boyar and Hetman of the Zaporozhian Host Ivan Martinovich Briukhovetskii in Gadiach/Hadiach, I overheard the captain (*sotnik*) of the Moscow Musketeers Kirila Kokoshev saying that Boyar and Hetman Ivan Martinovich ordered five women witches and a sixth, the wife of a Gadiach lieutenant, burned. And he ordered them burned because he thought that they bewitched him, the hetman, and his wife and sent the coughing disease

(*chakhotnaia bolezn'*) on them. And Kirila, the commander, told me, Ioana, that the word in Gadiach is that those women stole the baby from the womb of the hetman's wife, and another old woman witch took her ear! And when those women sat under guard in the cellar of the town of Menshii/the small town (*Menshii gorod*), mice and cats ran out from that cellar, and they ran around the city for a long time, and having run around, they hid themselves, no one knows where. And when Ioana was serving with Boyar and Hetman of the Zaporozhian Host Ivan Martinovich Briukhovetskii, [the hetman] was often very sick when he came to see me. And I, Ioana, wrote this report with my own hand.

2.13 POLITICAL SORCERY AGAINST THE PRUSSIAN KING (1760)

Source: RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 1958, 7 ll. We thank Aleksandr Lavrov for his transcription of the document and his notes, which inform our commentary.

Historically, whenever magic is accepted as an effective agent of change, those in power may be tempted to harness its force to their service, however ambivalently. Even at the height of the witch trials in early modern Europe, when magic was vehemently condemned as satanic heresy, some monarchs placed high value on the predictive skills of astrologers who could help them determine the most fortunate days for battles, while others sought to hire respected alchemists who could enrich their treasuries by turning base metals into gold. Rudolf II, king of Bohemia and Holy Roman Emperor, is a particularly intriguing exemplar of this tendency.

The notion that sorcery might enhance the welfare of the state has a long and varied history, but it is somewhat surprising to find that it continued to appeal to powerful leaders well into the eighteenth century. Aleksandr Lavrov notes that there is quite a bit of evidence that Peter I himself appreciated the potential for applying magic in the state's interest. For example, Lavrov refers to a case involving the Don Cossack Emelian Shchadrin. In 1718, Shchadrin announced that he knew how to defeat enemies by pouring water on them and engulfing them in fog. Peter was fascinated with the matter. The Preobrazhenskii Chancellery (a secret police agency dedicated to surveilling society and identifying treason or expressions of lese majesty) wasted quite a bit of effort and material capturing crows and extracting stones, which were supposed to bring about rain. The emperor was present for all the experiments. It was only after Shchadrin's lack of

success that he admitted "he had not had any training in apostasy, witchcraft, and the summoning of unclean spirits and does not have it today," after which he was beaten with the knout and exiled to hard labor for ten years.[54]

Using similar excuses for their experiments with magic, a priest from Kaluga, Simon Zakharin, who tried unsuccessfully to find buried treasure with the rare magical "split-open herb" (the German Springwurzel), and a lying informer named Vasilii Semakov explained their interest in sorcery as solely being in the "great sovereign's service."[55]

Over the course of the eighteenth century, "political sorcery" underwent considerable change as the pragmatism and rationalism of the new political culture rendered magical practices outdated and useless, at least in public discussion among sophisticated members of the elite. What they believed in private remained more complicated (see Document 4.8). However, if belief in the possibility of such miracles had lost currency in educated circles, among commoners they remained alive and vibrant. The military recruit Petr Gavrilov, a commoner, could still talk about the welfare of the state as a justification for his interest in sorcery, as seen in the document that follows.

The recruit Petr Gavrilov's 1760 declaration that he could take the Prussian king prisoner captive by means of sorcery

On March 26, 1759, the recruit Petr Gavrilov testified that he is a heretic (*i.e., sorcerer*) but he is prepared to reveal how only before the Secret Chancellery: While living at the home of the merchant-miller Ivan Pavlov from Elets (*a town about 250 miles south of Moscow*), he learned malefic magic and the use of "black herbs called *mikalai*, how to walk on water as if he were on solid ground and not get wet, how to divert river water so that it would run overhead or release marsh water onto a dry path, and how to create a dense fog at daybreak. With that knowledge he could cover the Prussian king and his entire army with fog and release water and capture the king himself alive."

Verdict

Even members of the Secret Chancellery did not want to witness Petr Gavrilov's experiments and in April 1760 ordered that the liar be beaten with the lash without mercy.

Chapter 3

LAWS AND GUIDELINES CONCERNING THE PROSECUTION OF WITCHCRAFT, LATE TWELFTH CENTURY TO 1885

The study of the legislative foundations of witchcraft trials raises all sorts of interesting and significant questions. In the survey provided here, we examine the precepts of formal law throughout the time and across the various jurisdictions covered by this volume, and we try to provide a sense of how those laws were applied. A few general observations will be helpful in working through this material. First, not all laws against witchcraft were actually implemented, so one should bear in mind the gulf that may yawn between law as written and law as lived or practiced or experienced. Second, in early modern legal systems that were cobbled together as boundaries shifted, empires expanded and incorporated new populations, and overlapping jurisdictions bumped up against each other, it could be unclear which authority should hear a case or what legal statute should pertain. This gray zone could leave room for clever litigants to seek out the most

promising venues for airing their complaints, or ways to maneuver within legal systems often stacked against the common person. In the particular instance of witchcraft, the range of jurisdictions was particularly broad, since it was one of the rare crimes that could fall under either secular or spiritual authorities. Following the tensions between those competing authorities proves enlightening in trying to reconstruct the way that lawgivers and litigants conceived of this particular crime and of the dangers it entailed. Finally, even when jurisdictions were sorted out and the relevant legal statutes were clear, in some venues the authorities might find ways to avoid prescribed legal norms. This disregard for the letter of the law, particularly in sentencing, appears to be a factor in the relatively small number of trials and low execution rate of accused witches in the Ukrainian regions under both Polish-Lithuanian and Russian rule. It is with the legal history of this region, the eastern Ukrainian territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, that we will begin, before turning to Muscovite Russia, and finally, the Russian Empire in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The primary legal statute regulating witch trials in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, and in most of Continental Europe in one way or another, in the early modern period was the Code *Carolina* that Charles V issued in 1532 for the Holy Roman Empire. The *Carolina* marked an important milestone in European legislation. Drafted by the Reichstag (Estate Assembly) of the Holy Roman Empire and authorized by the emperor, it regulated judicial process with the goal of achieving a uniform, just, and effective system. As the emperor explained in the preamble to the published code, it aspired to explain "how and in what manner judicial proceedings in criminal cases ought best to be conducted according to law and equity; in order that from henceforth all and each of our and the Empire's subjects can in penal matters—in consideration of the enormity and hazardousness of the same—follow the above-mentioned summary, in accord with the common law, equity, and honored custom."[1] The code set out rigorous rules for determining what kinds of evidence would suffice to prove guilt, with general principles and specific standards for particular crimes. It established courtroom proceedings and set standards for the use of torture.

It established the circumstances under which torture should be applied and how questioning should take place in stages: before torture, with threat of torture, during torture, and after torture, in order to confirm the confessions taken under duress.

For all its commitment to standardization, the code produced less uniformity than one might expect, given its widespread adoption both within imperial territories and beyond, in places such as Sweden, the port cities of the Hanseatic League, and Poland. Particularly in witchcraft trials, exceptions were baked in from the start. Since the crimes of European witches were imagined to be conducted in secret and sometimes in spectral form, at satanic sabbaths or through the aid of demons or spirits, catching witches red-handed was by definition nearly impossible. Moreover, the crime, widely understood to involve the abjuration of Christ and a pact with the devil, constituted both heresy and treason of such a heinous scale that it came to be categorized as a *crimen exceptum*, a crime so vile that normal rules need not apply. This legal loophole allowed witch-hunting enthusiasts in judicial roles to evade the limits and regulations on torture and to lower the standards of evidence required for conviction. The flexibility in application of the *Carolina*, however, allowed authorities of more humanist bent to tamp down the prosecution of witches in their jurisdictions, leading to wide regional variations under a purportedly single, unified law code.[2]

Interestingly, despite the fascination of many early modern demonologists in the links between witchcraft and the devil, the *Carolina* does not delve into the satanic aspects of sorcery in its guidelines for adjudicating such cases. Rather, it constrains its instructions to determining whether the accused practiced witchcraft—and if so, using what words, deeds, or "things"—and to identifying the people involved in the spread of magical knowledge: "The person shall also be asked from whom he learned such sorcery." Finally, the articles devoted to witchcraft aim, at a practical level, to determine "what damage … occurred."[3] This pragmatic approach to investigating and prosecuting witchcraft would characterize most of the trials in our regions of interest, including both the Polish-Lithuanian

Commonwealth, where the *Carolina* exerted a powerful influence, and in Muscovy, where it did not.

WITCHCRAFT TRIALS AND THE LAW IN THE UKRAINIAN LANDS

The very earliest statutes on witchcraft from the Rus territories, recorded in the Statute of Saint Prince Volodymyr on Church Courts and the Church Statute of Iaroslav the Wise, designate witchcraft as a religious infraction to be adjudicated in church courts. When we pick up the thread again in the early modern period, however, the crime of witchcraft had come to be considered more a secular crime, to be heard in secular, sometimes criminal, courts in the Ukrainian towns of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Trials generally focused on the kinds of real-world harm that witches were thought to inflict, including loss or damage of property or livestock, as well as sickness, impotence, infertility, or death. Acting on complaints from victims of alleged witchcraft and sorcery, magistrates of the autonomous Ukrainian towns and cities investigated them, identified and summoned witnesses, and applied torture if they thought it was necessary.

Multiple legal frameworks operated simultaneously in the Ukrainian lands. In the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the "Ruthenian" lands (Eastern Orthodox areas under Lithuanian rule) were governed loosely by some adapted form of the *Russkaia Pravda*, the medieval Rus law code, and customary law. Perhaps because witchcraft had been categorized as a religious infraction in medieval times, the secular *Russkaia Pravda* made no mention of the subject. The *Pravda* was superseded in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and its Ukrainian territories by the new Lithuanian Statute of 1529, which in turn was reissued in two subsequent iterations in 1566 and 1588. For Ukraine, however, it was the second version that in principle remained most relevant, because in 1569, as part of a negotiated union between the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Ukrainian regions passed into Polish control. In the period of the witch

trials, Ukraine answered to first Polish, then Cossack, and ultimately to Russian rulers, not Lithuanians.

Nonetheless, and just to make matters more confusing, officially, the sixteenth-century Lithuanian Statutes functioned in Ukrainian lands before and during the period of unified Polish-Lithuanian rule and continued to apply in the region long after it was incorporated into the Russian Empire. Each of the three sequential versions of this code addressed the matter of witchcraft or sorcery, each time with greater specificity. The First Statute of Lithuania of 1529 explicitly mentioned witchcraft and its ability (presumably by way of spells) to neutralize the torture of criminals. The Second Statute of Lithuania of 1566, according to the historian Gitana Zujienė, "identified where such spells could be found, in the mouth, hair and armpits of the accused, in the same places where spells were searched for during witches' trials in Western Europe. There was no direct punishment for the use of spells as such. However, a person suspected of using spells during torture was immediately considered guilty. The Third Statute of Lithuania of 1588 repeated the same provisions regarding spells," but added witchcraft to a list of criminal acts.[4]

In keeping with the fluid practices already noted, the statutes functioned at the same time and often on par with other legislation, and the courts could flexibly select which norm to invoke. The historian Kateryna Dysa finds little mention of the statutes' precepts in Ukrainian witchcraft trials.[5] We come across very occasional references, including one invocation of a nonexistent article of the 1588 statute, but by and large, it was Magdeburg Law and the *Carolina* that set the framework in which witchcraft was discussed and prosecuted.

Another legal system operated simultaneously with the statutes in the Ukrainian lands. Magdeburg Law, a set of Germanic laws that conferred considerable judicial and administrative autonomy on town authorities, had been gradually imported to significant towns in the Ukrainian lands of Galicia-Volhynia in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. Magdeburg Law allowed municipalities a degree of protection from royal or princely incursion. As towns grew in prominence from the fifteenth through the

seventeenth centuries, Magdeburg rights were extended to them by Lithuanian princes, Polish kings, and Ukrainian hetmans. In the aftermath of imposing the unpopular Union of Brest in 1596, which mandated that Orthodox believers recognize the authority of the pope in Rome in exchange for keeping their Byzantine-rite rituals, Polish authorities extended Magdeburg rights to the remaining townspeople and Cossacks of the eastern regions (or what became known as Right-Bank Ukraine).

For the most part, magistrates in the Ukrainian lands followed the legal recommendations that Bartłomiej Groicki (c. 1534–1605) collected in various compendia. A sixteenth-century jurist from Cracow, Groicki not only selected articles from such Germanic legal codes as the medieval *Speculum Saxonum* (and its popular variants, which were referred to as Magdeburg Law and Chełmo Law) and the *Carolina*, but also translated them from Latin into Polish and provided commentaries. According to Dysa, judges most frequently cited two of Groicki's compilations: *Ten postępek wybran jest z praw cesarskich, który Karolus V cesarz kazał wydać po wszystkich swoich państwiech* (These Guidelines … Are Taken from the Royal Laws which Charles V, the King, Ordered Published in All His Domains), also known as *Postępek sądów około karania na gardle* (Guidelines for the Courts regarding Capital Punishment), first published in 1559; and *Porządek sądów i spraw miejskich prawa majdeburskiego w Koronie Polskiej* (Procedures for the Courts and Affairs of Towns under Magdeburg Law in the Polish Crown) published the same year, a decade prior to the creation of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth through the union of the Polish monarchy and the Lithuanian grand duchy.[6]

Groicki's influential *Ten postępek* was based on the Code *Carolina*, but creatively adapted its legal norms to conform to Polish reality. For example, Groicki provided commentary on the section about judicial torture, expressing several concerns and offering cautionary advice to judges. He worried that fear would induce innocent defendants to make false confessions even though he believed in the necessity of torture.

Porządek was the most heavily used of Groicki's manuals because it included descriptions of the various types of courts, their functions, the

roles of the participants in the process, and finally, the death penalties for various crimes. Each town and city court was supposed to have one copy of *Porządek*. Some of them turned out to be handwritten copies. The manual's prescriptions were cited frequently if not always accurately in court cases.

Groicki cites witchcraft under four separate sections in his *Porządek*. It first appears under a heading that establishes the circumstances under which a person should be tried for witchcraft. These included the teaching of witchcraft, threatening others with witchcraft, and the actual use of witchcraft. Moving beyond the *Carolina*, which "preserved intact the Roman legal distinction between harmful and harmless magic," Groicki appears to imply that all witchcraft was malevolent in nature. Merely a suspicion that witchcraft had been employed, according to the *Porządek,* was enough for an accusation of witchcraft; verifiable harm was not a necessary element.[7] In practice, accusations came from private citizens, not from state representatives; they flowed into courts from society, rather than being part of a top-down witch hunt. Furthermore, Groicki deemed any hint of witchcraft "inappropriate for Christians," an act against God, and "forbidden by law." Nevertheless, direct references to pacts with the devil, the devil's mark, the coven of witches, the witches' sabbath, and apostasy that were so popular in the Germanic lands (but not in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) were conspicuously absent in Groicki's reworking, as they were in the *Carolina*.

Magdeburg Law continued to govern Ukrainian towns, even after areas of Ukraine broke away from the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the mid-seventeenth century. As a result of successful rebellions by Orthodox Ukrainian Cossacks between 1648 and 1654, three palatinates (Kyiv, Chernihiv, and Bratslav) separated from the Commonwealth under the provisions of the 1654 Treaty of Pereiaslav and united under the rule of an elected Ukrainian hetman or ataman. The Ukrainian Hetmanate enjoyed sovereign authority in international relations, although it came under the protection of the Muscovite tsar. A war between Muscovy and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth ended with the 1667 Truce of Andrusovo and division of Ukrainian lands between the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

and Muscovy along the Dnieper River, with the former regaining much of Right-Bank Ukraine and the latter confirming its suzerainty over the Left Bank, to which was now added the city of Kyiv. This diminished Hetmanate still enjoyed autonomy. Towns under the purview of the Hetmanate and areas to the east of it continued to adjudicate witchcraft cases according to Polish-Lithuanian norms even after coming under Russian rule. Russian authorities even extended Magdeburg rights to towns that had previously lacked them. Gradually, however, these rights were nibbled away in the Hetmanate: appeals of rulings from the town courts came to be heard first by regimental courts and, after 1730, by the Russian General Military Court. Sometimes the municipal courts referred to Russian decrees. In the fall of 1764, Catherine II abolished the military office of hetman, replacing it with a Russian governor-generalship. The administrative integration of the Hetmanate into the structure of the Russian Empire took seventeen years and resulted in the further erosion of Magdeburg structures of self-administration and of the previous legal system. The processes culminated in 1781 with the abolition of the Little Russian Governorate. A similar administrative Russification occurred in Ukrainian areas located east of the Hetmanate. Right-Bank Ukraine, which became a part of the Russian Empire at the end of the eighteenth century as a result of the partitions of Poland, retained the rights of Magdeburg Law until the 1830s, when it too became subject to Russian laws.

MUSCOVITE LAW AND WITCHCRAFT TRIALS

"Law" was an ill-defined concept in Muscovite courts.[8] This does not mean that it was taken lightly or was unimportant. Muscovite rulers took their role as lawgivers seriously, and their subjects were energetic in their use of the courts. Between 1497 and 1649, the rulers in the Kremlin issued three important statute books: the *Sudebnik* (Judicial Code) of 1497, the

Sudebnik of 1550, and the *Sobornoe ulozhenie* (the Conciliar Law Code) of 1649. The first two are rightly called judicial codes rather than law codes, because they expend most of their energy on regulating the conduct of officials and judges rather than setting out an affirmative set of laws, although they do contain regulations on a number of topics, such as landholding and inheritance or personal honor. The *Sobornoe ulozhenie* took a far more ambitious approach and established laws to govern many aspects of economic and social life. Two other codes, the *Sudebnik*s of 1589 and 1606, were also drawn up but received less general application. The 1589 code appears to have been implemented to some degree in the Russian North, while the 1606 code seems not to have been promulgated at all.

These law codes were the big-ticket items, and it is clear that they provided points of reference for officials in at least some court cases, where we can track their use through direct quotations or explicit mentions of various articles. Most of what we might call legislation, however, took a very different form: that is, it was embodied in various ad hoc decrees issued from Moscow, banning a certain behavior or requiring a particular action or procedure. Many of these were directed at particular regions and were disseminated individually by means of handwritten orders sent to the governors of the areas concerned, with each order addressed to the specific regional governor by name. Sometimes these decrees became cemented in Muscovite legal understanding and judicial practice, but more often these one-time rulings faded away. Successive degrees might repeat, repeal, undercut, or bypass earlier ones, leaving a welter of confusing, chaotic, and most often simply unknown orders on and off the books.

To some extent, this disorder mattered little. All important suits were decided in close consultation with the central authorities in Moscow. Local and provincial courts, even those staffed by high-level boyar officials, exercised little autonomy. The central chancelleries instructed judges to decide matters on their own, and minor cases could be decided locally. Any matter as serious as witchcraft, however, would be closely monitored. Every step had to be reported back to Moscow, with a full recap of the exchanges to date and the actions taken in response to Kremlin orders. This back and forth testified to the limited authority given to the law itself as a freestanding

agent. The law was not a strong enough entity to function on its own or to ensure adherence to Moscow's will. When we consider Muscovite "law," then, it is important to remember to put the term in quotation marks as we try to understand what it meant and how it functioned in context. This is not in any way to disparage early modern concepts or practices of lawmaking and law enforcement, but rather to underscore the ways in which law can function very differently in different societies.

As in Ukrainian courts, in Muscovy judicial investigations responded to complaints submitted by aggrieved parties. The plaintiff would submit a supplicatory petition to the relevant official. Who that official might be and in what institutional venue he served depended on the rank and social estate of the litigants and the nature of the offense. Different administrative-legal bodies adjudicated different types of people and different crimes. Musketeers, for instance, might take their cases to the Musketeers' Chancellery or to the local governor. Clerics might start their suits in diocesan or patriarchal courts. Regardless of where the suit began, if the issue was considered serious, tsarist officials usually oversaw the process and often insisted on transferring the case to their own central courts.

Having provided a general framework for understanding the law in the Muscovite context, we turn now to a very brief survey of the laws concerning magic and sorcery, most of which are presented in this chapter. The survey is necessarily brief, because these crimes made few inroads in formal legislation. As we noted at the outset, witchcraft, both a sin and a crime, constituted an unusual transgression in that it could fall under either secular or spiritual jurisdiction. In the Muscovite period, the Church ceded most authority over the investigation and prosecution of the crime to the state, but ecclesiastical authorities occasionally laid claim to a case, particularly if it involved participants holding clerical rank. Both statutory law and actual litigation attest to an ongoing struggle between secular and ecclesiastical authorities over the right to adjudicate witchcraft cases. The church courts may have dealt with minor instances of the crime and assigned penalties of penance and forced confinement in a monastery or convent, but little documentation of such cases survives (see Document

4.5). By and large, it was secular courts that heard witchcraft accusations, even when churchmen were involved.

In terms of written law, church codes imported from Byzantium via Bulgarian translation condemned witchcraft and even prescribed death to the malefactors, but ecclesiastical institutions could not implement capital punishments in Muscovy. The first two *Sudebnik*s made no mention of witchcraft. The earliest secular prohibition we have found dates to 1552, when Tsar Ivan IV issued a one-time decree in response to the vigorous condemnation of magic and its practitioners at the Stoglav Church Council of the previous year. Several decrees dealing directly or partly with witchcraft appeared in the middle of the seventeenth century under Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich. These include a 1648 decree, an indirect allusion to bewitchment in the 1649 Conciliar Law Code, another decree in 1653, and a single article in the 1669 "Newly Established Articles on Robbery, Brigandage, and Murder," an extensive code regulating criminal conduct.

The appearance of witchcraft sanctions in a criminal code raises the issue of what kind of infraction it was: a matter of criminal harm or of religious and spiritual violation. Various laws and decrees weighted the criminal and spiritual elements differently and framed the problem in different terms. Linguistically, the translations of the Byzantine Nomocanon (Church Law) that circulated in Muscovy and the edition published in Moscow in 1653 as *Kormchaia kniga* (Book of the Pilot) used an archaic Church Slavonic, while, for instance, the tsarist decree promulgated in that same year employed an up-to-date mid-seventeenth-century administrative chancellery language. Yet the *Kormchaia* condemns witchcraft as a form of criminal murder or fraud, while the secular degree expresses far more concern with the sinful nature of sorcerers' "acts repellent to God." This tension persists throughout the history of witchcraft persecution, in Russia and elsewhere, and it is well worth bearing in mind that the ecclesiastical/secular divide remained unresolved, both in terms of assigning jurisdiction and in defining what was most troubling about sorcery. Everyone seems to have agreed, however, that it was not a good thing.

IMPERIAL RUSSIAN LAW: WITCHCRAFT AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the situation regarding witchcraft changed dramatically. Unfortunately, the fact that the only surviving witchcraft trials in the first decades of that century were those investigated by Peter I's Preobrazhenskii Chancellery (1686–1729) creates difficulties in interpretation, because it is not clear whether the chancellery's implementation of the law was typical of the time. Associated with the secret police, the Preobrazhenskii Chancellery was the government agency responsible for prosecuting political crime, and so may have operated with exceptional license. Its investigators employed torture (as did officials at lower levels) and subjected accusers and defendants to harsh interrogations. What is clear is that in contrast to the seventeenth century, the articles of the *Sobornoe ulozhenie* were no longer employed in eighteenth-century witchcraft cases. As soon as the 1716 Military Statute and the 1720 Naval Statute were published, their clauses concerning witchcraft and sorcery were applied in all criminal cases, not only those involving military servitors. Beginning in 1720, the Secret Chancellery (which had been set up in 1718 to investigate treason charges against Peter's son Aleksei) began to hear denunciations of political sorcery. The Secret Chancellery was abolished in 1726 but reinstated in 1731, when it resumed investigating and interrogating cases involving sorcery. Witchcraft cases also fell under the purview of regimental and provincial offices, the Chancellery of Searches the Chancellery of Land Affairs, the Chief Magistrate's Office, the Chancellery of the Police, and the ecclesiastical court of the Holy Synod, the new governing body of the Russian Orthodox Church that Peter established in 1721.

As a new branch of government with authority equivalent to that of the Senate (which oversaw the secular administrative and court system), the Holy Synod was composed of ecclesiastical hierarchs who decided all church matters and religious affairs. It replaced the patriarch as leader of the Church, which Peter believed had enjoyed too much authority and independence from the state. Taking advantage of Peter's death in 1725 and

the weakening of autocratic power, the ecclesiastical judges who judged witchcraft cases that came before the Holy Synod preferred more lenient punishments of penance or excommunication to Peter's more draconian ones. Witchcraft cases came before the Holy Synod if they involved members of the clergy or if witchcraft charges arose in connection with other matters that fell under ecclesiastical jurisdiction, such as divorce or adultery. In their rulings they dutifully cited the new Military Statute but also cited a 1728 Synodal ruling that defined witchcraft in terms of previous church law as a way of ensuring the primacy of the latter.[9] This ruling was issued during a short-lived effort on the part of some members of the Holy Synod to restore the patriarchate. Although the effort toward counter-reform was snuffed out when Empress Anna took the throne in 1730, the more lenient ruling concerning witchcraft remained on the books and could be invoked. Russia never established completely separate secular and religious jurisdictions over witchcraft. This ambiguity, together with Peter's failure to identify a single institution for trying witchcraft cases or even a single level within the juridical system that would be responsible for adjudicating witchcraft cases led to ongoing confusion and overlapping of jurisdictions.

It is within this context that we have to understand the appearance of the May 25, 1731, law under Empress Anna (r. 1730–40). According to Elena Smilianskaia, the state's preoccupation with fraud and swindling rather than contracts with the devil propelled it to launch a campaign against witchcraft in tandem with its attack on traditional religious practices, which it now labeled "superstitions." Going well beyond matters connected to magic, the state questioned, for example, the veneration of uncorrupted corpses as saints, the acceptance of miracles without first subjecting them to ecclesiastical verification, belief in the sanctity of holy fools, and the veracity of individuals who believed themselves to be victims of demonic possession. Most of these attacks on traditional forms of piety can be traced back to Peter I and his adviser Feofan Prokopovich, who strove to regulate and reform religious expression, to make it visible and uniform.[10] Anna's decree followed that drive toward regulation but also perpetuated the ambivalence,

the vacillation between derision and fear, that characterized Peter's earlier legislation on magic. Although seemingly adopting a rationalist and Enlightenment understanding of "sorcery" as being fraudulent, the authors of the 1731 decree paradoxically continued to apply the cruelest punishments to both practicing sorcerers and their clients, as Peter I had decreed in the Military Statute. The supposed swindlers and their supposedly gullible victims were equally harshly punished, suggesting at the very least some uncertainty about what constituted the criminal offense: fraud or actual sorcery. Reflecting the continuing official concern with magic, however conceived, as a pressing danger, Anna's pronouncement resulted not in a decrease in witchcraft prosecutions but rather an *increase* in state and church persecution of witchcraft and other popular magical beliefs, although denunciations mainly came from below.[11] Anna had reestablished the Secret Chancellery in 1731, which meant that political sorcery came under stricter police scrutiny again. The stringent 1731 decree continued to operate in the reign of Empress Elizabeth (r. 1741–61), the period that witnessed the highest numbers of witchcraft trials. Of the 240 eighteenth-century witchcraft cases that Smilianskaia and Aleksandr Lavrov were able to identify, 63 percent occurred between 1731 and 1761.[12] The other significant innovation in the Elizabethan period was an unpublicized moratorium on the use of the death penalty beginning in 1744, after the last suspected witch in Russia was executed (by beheading) for "poisoning her mistress."[13] In practice, courts could still impose that penalty on the basis of pre-1744 laws, but all such sentences had to be reviewed by the Senate, Russia's highest secular judicial body. The Senate reduced the sentences unless otherwise instructed by the ruler. Hard labor became a substitute for capital punishment.

Lavrov points out with regard to the 1731 decree that what seems at first to be a contradiction between a high Enlightenment commitment to rationalism, with its disdain for irrational "superstition" and the continuing and even intensifying prosecution of suspected witches, may in fact reflect our own assumptions about the eighteenth century more than anything inherent to the dynamics of the time. He suggests that Anna's decree should

be seen not as an assertion of disbelief in the reality of magic but rather as a response to the Holy Synod's 1728 claim to greater jurisdiction over witchcraft. Religious and secular authorities continued to struggle over the prerogative to judge these cases, and successive reforms tipped the balance first one way and then another. The empress's decree drew jurisdiction firmly back into secular courts, at least for the moment. It clearly states that the persecution of witchcraft was within the purview of the state and not of the Church.[14]

It is also important to keep in mind that not every new law in the eighteenth century was necessarily active or functioning. As had been the case in Muscovite times, the lack of both systemization and clear legal precedence of laws, unless they were a part of a law code, meant that laws were promulgated only once, and if an issue remained pertinent and pressing, a ruler had to promulgate new laws on the subject. Hence decrees could and did repeat or contradict previous pronouncements.

The reign of Catherine II brought a sea change in the legislative discourse on witchcraft. Her husband, Peter III, had abolished the Secret Chancellery in early 1762, and political crimes, including political sorcery, were thereafter adjudicated by a number of different agencies. In October of that year, a few months after Catherine had seized the throne and Peter was assassinated, the new empress reiterated the precedent of previous laws by advocating harsh punishments for fraudulent "shriekers" (*klikushi*), those who identified themselves as demonically possessed as a result of bewitchment.[15] Peter I's initial law had suggested that there were differences between genuine and fraudulent shriekers, while Empress Anna in her modification of Peter's law embraced the view that all demonic possession was by definition fraudulent, a sentiment that Catherine II shared. In her 1767 Instructions to the Legislative Commission, which she charged with codifying all of Russia's laws, Catherine endorsed the Enlightenment's notion of religious toleration, in general, and its understanding of witchcraft more specifically. With regard to investigations of cases involving "wizardry and heresy," she warned that such "accusations … can unduly disturb order [and infringe upon] the liberty and welfare of citizens and can be the cause

of innumerable tyrannies, unless limits of the law are placed on them."[16] She furthermore noted the absurdity of witchcraft accusations and the impossibility of providing evidence for witchcraft. Catherine's pronouncements, however, did not deter denunciations of witchcraft and the tendency of judges to side with the accusers, many of whom were shriekers.

Finally, in early 1770, after reviewing a case involving witchcraft and demonic possession in the Far North, members of the Senate acquiesced to Catherine's rationalist language against witchcraft, referring to magical craft as nothing but a "superstition." For the first time it admonished judges for accepting accusations without adequate evidence, compelling those accused of witchcraft to make false confessions with torture, and letting off the shrieking accusers. The decree was more of a polemic ridiculing superstition from a rationalist position than a law.

Decriminalization was not a definitive event tied to a single piece of legislation but was instead a prolonged process. Rather than cease prosecution of witchcraft altogether, as had occurred in England, Catherine redefined witchcraft, with the exception of political sorcery against the crown, as a crime too insignificant to merit the attention of the highest courts and not deserving severe legal sanction. Rather than condemning it as an effective threat, she classified it as an offense associated with "stupidity, ignorance, and fraud." She relegated it to the jurisdiction of newly created provincial courts called courts of equity. The new institutions were to adjudicate suits involving "lunatics and minors," and others not fully responsible for their actions, including those foolish enough to believe in witchcraft, as well as "crimes carried out in a fit of passion, or by accident or negligence." The legislation also introduced the progressive notion of *habeas corpus* to protect individuals from being incarcerated in prisons for more than three days without just cause. Inspired by a hodgepodge of English and European laws and drawing on the Russian ruler's traditional prerogative to grant criminals mercy, Catherine encouraged judges in the courts of equity to take mitigating circumstances into account, to rule with mercy, and to allow flexibility in sentencing. She explicitly instructed them

to apply less stringent penalties than the law prescribed. Reflecting this commitment to mercy, the courts were also known as "courts of conscience."[17]

In line with previous laws, the 1775 statute's vague language regarding witchcraft, however, created problems for legal interpretation. False witches and sorcerers who swindled others into believing that they could harm them or use their magic for other purposes presumably still had to answer for their actions. The law also suggested that witches and sorcerers could themselves be victims of unfortunate circumstances that resulted from the ignorance and superstition of others. On this score, most pressingly, it aimed to protect innocent people from malicious accusations. It neither defined sorcery and witchcraft nor provided precise sentences for individuals either engaging in sorcery against others or seeking aid from sorcerers.

Some clarification came in the April 8, 1782, Police Statute. Banning witchcraft and sorcery altogether, the decree placed such actions under the rubric of crimes that disturbed the peace. It defined "witchcraft, or sorcery, or any other deception resulting from superstition, or ignorance, or swindling" as involving one or more magical practices, including the possession of talismans and incantations; the casting of spells over grasses, potions, or a person's footprint; and divination. In targeting all of the prosaic and ubiquitous magical practices, the decree claimed that so-called "superstitious" witchcraft could still be harmful to the polity.[18] Once again, precise language about how the courts of equity were to adjudicate the cases was not forthcoming.

The courts of equity were set up in various provinces' capitals at different dates and from the outset were beset with not only a lack of clear mandates but also problems of staffing. They met only irregularly. To add to these problems, all these courts were shut down at the end of the eighteenth century by Catherine the Great's son Paul I (r. 1796–1801), who was determined to undo most of his mother's Enlightened reforms. Some were reopened during Alexander I's reign (1801–25), while others had to await Nicholas I's reign (1825–55). Some courts were disbanded yet again, some

as early as 1828, due to an insufficient number of cases. Most closed their doors in either 1852 or 1857, leaving only those in St. Petersburg and Moscow to function until 1861.[19] Various decrees, beginning with one in May 1824, stipulated that in those areas where courts of equity did not exist, cases belonging to them were to be heard by provincial criminal courts.[20]

Ultimately, because of insufficient guidance and a contradictory battery of laws, the judgments regarding witchcraft cases in the courts of equity were inconsistent. They continued to evince widespread and entrenched beliefs in the power of witchcraft and magic and the dangers that enchanted substances posed to humans, even among upper-class judges and government administrators. Acceptance of the rationalist notion that witchcraft was a crime of fantasy took considerable time.

Medical testimony within the Russian law court eventually tipped the balance against the possibility of witchcraft for judges and members of Russian upper classes. Medical experts had been consulted in Russian witchcraft investigations already by the early seventeenth century. However, in an era when the boundaries between science and magic were still porous, not only in Russia but also across Europe, physicians and healers themselves subscribed to beliefs in magic and alchemy. They could be suspected of witchcraft if they were found to possess certain herbs and plants or incantations and recipes that could magically transform ordinary substances into love potions, potions to influence their superiors, or something harmful and even poisonous. In the seventeenth century, medical experts from the Apothecary Chancellery occasionally weighed in on whether a substance was dangerous, but even if it were found to be harmless, they were reluctant to rule out the possibility that it had been converted into a threat through malevolent spells.[21] By the late eighteenth century, examinations of plant material found in the possession of accused witches generally found them to be benign. However, that finding still did not necessarily spare the witch the rod, if the judges continued to believe in the dangerous nature of enchanted substances. If a case was judged to involve premeditated murder, the charge of magic would become secondary, and

the judges of the provincial court of equity in question would then send it on to a regular criminal court for adjudication.

In the nineteenth century, medical science also began to have an impact on upper-class perceptions of those who claimed to be demonically possessed. Adopting a new "scientific" language, doctors and members of the educated elite began to describe "shrieking" as a peasant variant of hysteria rather than demonic possession. Some physicians thought the symptoms of what they now understood as abnormal and irrational female emotionality would disappear on their own; over the course of the nineteenth century, others increasingly came to believe that the condition was treatable, prescribing hospitalization, bromide and water treatments, and even totally unnecessary and dangerous operations on women's sexual organs. Doctors repeatedly criticized the Russian Orthodox Church for ministering to these women with a combination of fasting, confession and communion, ministrations with holy water and holy oil, as well as exorcisms, rather than with what they considered more scientific treatments. The criticism could go both ways, however, as is evident in Document 4.10 from 1839–40, in which a priest condemned the heartless assault on a group of possessed women prescribed by physicians. The intrusion of modern medicine into the Russian law court eventually persuaded judges and members of Russia's upper classes that magic and witchcraft were powerless and that only fear of witchcraft was real.

Coinciding with the greater sway of medical findings, the state adopted more precise language than that which had characterized Catherine II's vague decrees and provided more specific guidance for the courts. Mid-nineteenth-century Russian criminal law introduced concrete and far milder penalties for individuals who claimed to be witches or sorcerers—that is, charlatans who were now viewed as conning gullible clients into paying for their phony services. Incarceration varied from a few days to a couple of years depending on the nature of the offense, and sentences were heavier for recidivists. These penalties were significantly reduced in the 1885 Penal Code, reflecting a general trend toward a fuller decriminalization of witchcraft after the 1861 emancipation of the serfs. Thereafter, Russian

courts generally did not prosecute cases of witchcraft unless an individual had been slandered by being labeled a witch or if violence against alleged witches had taken place. The focus had shifted to the prosecution of individuals who either falsely accused others as being sorcerers or attacked alleged witches and sorcerers and the protection of individuals charged with witchcraft.

From the late 1860s on, the state finally promoted a clear message by not prosecuting witches, even though witchcraft remained a crime in the penal code. Demoted to the status of a minor crime, it had been stripped of the ambivalence and ambiguities of earlier legislation, which had simultaneously dismissed witchcraft as superstition and punished its practitioners as if they wielded genuine powers. Three centuries of formal witchcraft prosecution had come to an end. When the courts no longer punished witches after emancipation, villagers did, however, occasionally resort to extralegal measures against them. Peasant communities might attack or even kill individuals thought to be witches, even though they could have rid themselves of unwanted neighbors by other means; village communities, for example, still enjoyed the right to expel members to Siberia by administrative order. If caught, the perpetrators of vigilante violence were arrested and tried but were often given light sentences or acquitted as it proved difficult to identify the principal offenders.

The end of prosecution did not eradicate popular beliefs in magic or put an end to the fear of witchcraft, although the particular configurations of those beliefs remained dynamic. Villagers continually modified witchcraft's characteristics as the circumstances of modern life buffeted their customs and altered their experiences. Increasing urbanization and industrialization, and the seasonal outflows of mainly teenage and adult men from villages to cities and factories wrought profound economic and social changes. At the same time, European influences from print literature made their way to the countryside. These changes in turn affected ideas and fears about witches. Most notably, the fundamental picture of a witch shifted, taking on the gendered characteristics more familiar in European lore. Women predominated among those suspected of witchcraft, although cunning male

sorcerers could still be imposing figures. Further, physical markers of witchcraft, particularly witches' tails, entered the popular imagination, as documented by ethnographers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Extralegal punishment, even killing, of supposed witches continued into the 1920s, after the fall of the tsarist regime. For every reported incident, numerous others remained hidden from official eyes. State campaigns against superstitious beliefs were once again launched in the early 1930s in conjunction with the brutal collectivization campaigns, which set out to destroy the traditional communal villages and replace them with massive state-run farms in which land was consolidated and worked collectively by peasants, leaving them only small garden plots for individual consumption. Because censorship prohibited the reporting of most crimes in Soviet newspapers until 1989, as socialism was supposed to eradicate crime, extralegal justice disappeared from view.

At the end of the twentieth century, brutal killings of witches made the front pages of the liberalizing press. In 1997, a woman was murdered and five others were gravely injured by a pair of men out to avenge supposed witchcraft assaults in the village of Terekhovo, just about an hour's drive south of Moscow.[22] Then between 2001 and 2004, a decade after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, Russian newspapers reported a total of seven grisly murders of suspected witches and two attempted murders over the course of about seven years in various parts of the country, including Moscow and its outskirts. These stories contain elements that are similar to witch murders elsewhere: a child's unexplained illness; a series of unexplained deaths and a sudden illness being blamed on a woman "witch" and her daughter; a man's impotence being laid at the feet of a couple who had been close friends with the man in question; a woman's quarrel with a village caretaker about a henhouse; a woman's unsuccessful treatment of another woman for illness; a woman suspecting another woman of wanting to put the evil eye on a child; a domestic dispute that resulted in a drunken husband suspecting his wife of witchcraft; and finally a mob attack on alleged witches identified among neighboring Roma.[23] Such murders are extremely rare and not at all unique to Russia. Similar horrors appear from

time to time in the present day across the globe, wherever a substratum of witchcraft lore persists, providing a vein of explanatory possibilities that can be mined in extremis.[24] These gruesome episodes are reminders that in periods of social and economic upheaval or when personal stressors are extremely high, lingering beliefs in the malevolence of individuals can still have dire consequences.

3.1 BYZANTINE CHURCH LAW AND ITS ECHOES IN RUSSIA

Muscovite secular law paid little attention to regulating the practice of sorcery. A single article in the 1589 law code addressed the issue (see Document 3.6), and we find occasional references to its statutes in actual case law (although not pertaining to the witchcraft clause in particular), but that code had limited application. The great legal compilations of 1497, 1550, and 1649 (see Document 3.8) made no explicit mention of the crime of magic. Church law, however, based on Byzantine Greek models, included sorcery in its list of dangerous infractions. It concentrated on the potential for physical injury, rather than on spiritual or theological harm, and identified killing through use of magical potions as a crime worthy of death. Byzantine church law reached Rus early, probably by the eleventh century, via Bulgarian translations.[25] Deriving from the Greek Nomocanon or Law Code originally compiled in Constantinople in the sixth century, church law codes in Rus were known variously as *Kormchaia kniga* (Book of the Pilot) or *Merilo pravednoe* (The Just Rule or The Balance), or as the *gradskie zakony* (civil laws transmitted through collections of Byzantine church law), which could also contain additions of secular law. As time went by, variants crept into the texts as elements of secular law were inserted and as manuscript copies introduced slight differences.

Printing came relatively late to the East Slavic lands, but when the printing press arrived, editions of *Kormchaia kniga* were among the earliest books published. In Kyiv, still under the control of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the great reforming metropolitan of Kyiv, Petro Mohyla, supervised the printing of a version of the *Kormchaia* in 1650. Moscow produced its own edition, very closely based on Mohyla's, in 1653.[26] Printing made it far easier for the authorities to standardize laws. In Muscovy the *Kormchaia*, along with the even more widely disseminated Conciliar Law Code, became accessible to tsarist agents throughout the realm. The first passage presented here is taken from the 1653 Moscow edition of the *Kormchaia*. The particular relationships singled out for scrutiny in this passage—slaves and masters, husbands and wives—alert us to the intimate social contexts where magic was thought most likely to occur and was most feared. The prescribed form of execution follows the Byzantine norm, rather than

actual Muscovite practice. In seventeenth-century Muscovy, around 15 percent of those convicted of witchcraft were sentenced to death. The majority were exiled to the borderlands—the Ukrainian regions or Siberia—or released under strict surety bonds, rather than executed, presumably reflecting the severe underpopulation of the country and the need to preserve the working population and to supply the borderlands with laboring hands. When execution was mandated, the orders either specified that the guilty parties should be burned alive in a wooden cage (see *Figure 3*) or simply noted that they should be "executed."

Law codes provide valuable insights into the ways that powerful lawmakers understood the proper ordering of society and the kinds of infractions that threatened that order. The emphasis on witchcraft as physical harm, for instance, points to a system of thought somewhat removed from the theological preoccupations of many European demonologists of the era.

Another way to study the law shifts away from the conceptual universe of the lawmakers and to the world of actual practice. To what extent were laws about magic applied and enforced? Embedded in the second document in 3.1, reproduced here, we find evidence that at least one working judge kept a copy of the *Kormchaia* at hand and referred to it in writing up his account of a trial of an accused sorcerer. This court record is absolutely unique in showing us a direct quotation of church law. The precise match in wording here proves that the judge's source was the *Kormchaia* of 1653, not the watered-down and slightly altered version that made its way into the "Newly Established Articles" (see the first document in 3.10).[27]

***Kormchaia kniga* (1653)**

Source: *Kormchaia kniga*, Moscow, 1653, l. 517; quoted in Iu. A. Kozlov, "Fragment koldovskogo dela XVII v. s tsitatami iz Kormchei knigi 1653 g.," in Problemy istorii Rossii, no. 3: *Novgorodskaia Rus': Istoricheskoe prostranstvo i kul'turnoe nasledie* (Ekaterinburg: Volot, 2000), http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Russ/XVII/1660-1680/Kold_delo_1669/text.htm.

Evildoers, sorcerers (*gubiteli, charotvortsy*) who invoke demons to harm a person shall be beheaded by the sword. Those devising talismans, supposedly for the benefit of people but [in reality] for their own shameless profit, are to be denounced publicly and imprisoned. Or if a free person or a slave is found guilty of having given someone [a potion] to drink: a wife her husband, or a husband his wife, or a slave her master, and if, because of that, the victim falls into illness, and having drunk the potion, he falls sick or dies, the guilty party shall be executed by the sword and beheaded.[28]

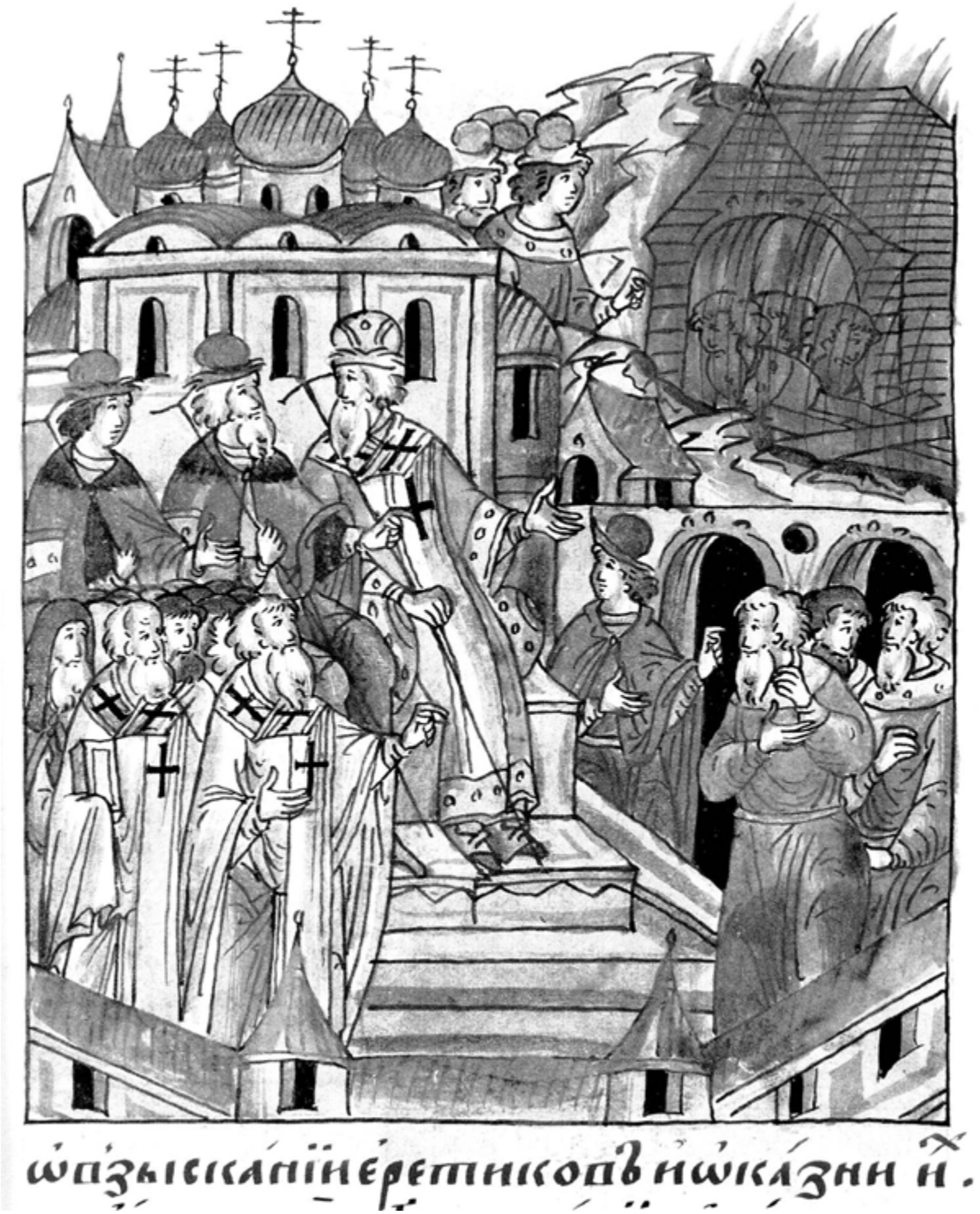

Figure 3: Burning *v srube*: Executions by burning were relatively rare in Russian witchcraft cases, but when they did occur, the condemned were burned alive inside a small wooden structure rather than at the stake. Miniature of the burning of the Judaizer heretics in 1504, from the great illustrated chronicle compilation of the 1560s or 1570s. *Litsevoi letopisnyi svod XVI veka: Russkaia letopisnaia istoriia*, Book 18, *1503–1527 gg.* (Moscow, AKTEON, 2010), 43. Reproduced courtesy of AKTEON.

Excerpt from a court case from the late 1660s containing a fragment of the *Kormchaia*

Source: RGADA, f. 210, op. 14, Sevskii stol, d. 230, ll. 1–4; full text reproduced and discussed in Kozlov, "Fragment koldovskogo dela."

Aside from the quotation from the *Kormchaia*, this case is also remarkable for the fact that the crime hinges on the accusation of renouncing God and swearing allegiance to the devil. In other words, this is a rather unusual case where a Muscovite sorcery charge involves the kind of satanism that, as we have just noted, the Byzantine codes and their Russian adaptations left unmentioned.

The surviving record begins mid-stream and, like many of the trial records from the seventeenth century, has no resolution, so we can't know what happened to the various men involved. The case showcases a world full of men on the move and an active exchange of spells and magical advice, creating dynamic circulation of magical lore. Literacy also plays an important role in facilitating the spread of forbidden wisdom.

[The interrogators asked who] gave them the written spells and notebook for divination and who taught them and from whom they copied the magical writings, and did they renounce our Lord Jesus Christ as written in those writings, and did they attract anyone to themselves using love spells, and for whom did they tell fortunes, and do they know any other such spells (*shepty*) and sorcery (*charovaniia*) and or other criminality? And the musketeer Ivashko Motokh in questioning and in face-to-face confrontation [with his accuser] while standing by the instruments of torture repeated the same testimony that he gave earlier, while in Pereslavl (*a city about ninety miles northeast of Moscow*). He said: the criminal letters belonged to Vaska Ivanov and not to him, Ivashko, and he did absolutely nothing at all with them, and he has done nothing criminal at all, and he swears this by his and Vaska's flesh. But with torture Vaska Ivanov confessed: he got the God-denying spell that is written in a sheaf of papers, from Nikitka Ivanov, who lived with the Georgian tsarevich (*son of the ruler*) Nikolai Davidovich in his household, and he got the divination notebook from a man from Nizhnii Novgorod (*about 250 miles east of Moscow*) named Mikiforko Vasilev about three years ago, and he studied it with him. But whether that Mikiforko is still alive or not, or where he is now, that he doesn't know. And following the instructions of the writings that are written in the stacked sheaves of papers, and reading it over water, he renounced Christ and hung

his cross on his back, and he spit in the water, and he summoned the devil to help him so that he could fornicate with women, but he didn't get anything out of it. And he taught Nikitko to tell fortunes using the notebook and gave it to him to copy, and the spell about the residue of soap, about how to wash the dead, that he gave to that same Nikitko. And he, Vaska, learned that spell from Mikiforko, son of Emelka, deacon of a church of Solikamsk (*a town in the Urals, about one thousand miles east and north of Moscow*). And that was about three years ago, and he doesn't know whether that Mikiforko is alive, and in what church his father is deacon. And he, Vaska, copied that spell for genitals (*literally, "for the secret member," usually referring to the penis, thus, a sex spell*) from Ivashka Panteleev, who also lived with the Georgian tsarevich in his household and (*words missing in the text*) he tried using that spell but he didn't get anything out of it. And for that spell he, Vaska, gave Ivashko the two spells he had learned from the deacon's son Mikiforko: one to get women to have sex, and the other to get people to be kind [to you], and he taught him to say the spells, and, having taken an eye from a living chicken and pulverized it (*istershi*), to give it to women to drink in water. As for the bewitched soap, rub it off with a towel and give that towel to people to dry themselves with, and they will be kind [to you]. Vaska didn't implicate himself in any other criminality and didn't confess to anything else.

And as for Nikitka Ivanov, from whom many criminal writings in notebooks and in stacked sheaves of paper and also crushed plants or grasses wrapped up in pieces of paper were taken, he confessed with torture too. And Vaska Ivanov[29] said to him: I wrote out in my own hand spells for women and the God-denying spells, and Vaska told him to follow the instructions that are written in those writings, but he himself never did anything with them. And having copied the notebook from Vaska, he learned to do divination with it, but, not having learned how to do it [properly], he ripped up the notebook. And as for the spell over soap, he copied it out for himself from Vaska, and, using that spell he incanted over a piece of soap, and rubbed it on a towel and gave the towel to the Georgian Tamasko Grigorev to dry himself with, so that he would treat him kindly, but he didn't reap any benefit from it. And he said that all those spells and

crushed grasses that were taken from him, Nikitka—the God-denying spells in the sheaves of paper that he gave to Vaska, and the spells to protect against weapons that are in the notebook and are written in the sheaves of paper, and the crushed grasses or herbs that are wrapped in pieces of paper and are meant to get women to have sex with you—he, Nikitka, got them from a townsman of Ustiug Velikii (*a town 570 miles northeast of Moscow*) named Vaska Semenov. And he said he doesn't know whether that Vaska is still alive. And he never taught anyone else to use those writings, and he didn't give the grasses to anyone, and he himself never used any of them for anything and didn't confess to anything else.

Ivashko Panteleev, son of a townsman from Kostroma, who lived in the household of the Georgian tsarevich, confessed both during questioning and then with torture. He confessed that he copied out two spells for himself from dictation by Vaska Ivanov: one for fornication with women using a chicken eye, and the other using soap to make people treat you well. In return he, Ivashko, gave Vaska a spell for the secret member, a spell he (*Ivashko*) had copied himself from a man from Vologda (*about three hundred miles north of Moscow*) named Kiriushka Alekseev. That Kiriushka died, and he, Ivashko, ripped up those written spells, and he didn't do anything with them and he didn't bewitch anyone to make them have sex with him. And Ivashko didn't confess to anything more. And the musketeer Ivashko Motokh in the village (*missing words*) died from torture in Pereslavl.

(Here follows the remarkable passage from the Kormchaia*, complete with a citation of the Byzantine source, inserted by the official who was hearing the case, or perhaps by the scribe who recorded it. The mention of a "printed" source supports the supposition that the source of the passage was the published 1653* Kormchaia.)

In the book of the *Gradskii zakon* (Civil Law), in the 39th part, in the 49th chapter, in article 2 it is printed: Those who work enchantment or [work] to harm a person, or who keep such [magical spells or talismans] or sell [them], should be tortured like a murderer.

In the book of [the Byzantine emperors,] Tsars Leon and Constantine, in chapter [8], in statute 2[0], it is printed:

> Evildoers, sorcerers (*gubiteli, charotvortsy*) who invoke demons to harm a person shall be beheaded by the sword. Those devising talismans, supposedly for the benefit of people but [in reality] for their own shameless profit, are to be denounced publicly and imprisoned. Or if a free person or a slave is found guilty of having given someone [a potion] to drink: a wife her husband, or a husband his wife, or a slave her master, and if, because of that, the victim falls into illness, and having drunk the potion, he falls sick or dies, the guilty party shall be executed by the sword and beheaded.

And, Great Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, what do you decree concerning the prisoners Vaska Ivanov, Nikitka Ivanov, and Ivashko Panteleev?

Church Statute of Iaroslav the Wise (late twelfth/early thirteenth century)

Source: Adapted from Daniel H. Kaiser, ed. and trans., *The Laws of Rus'—Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries* (Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks Publisher, 1992), 45–50. Brackets in the original. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.

The statute of Prince Iaroslav (1019–1054) purports to date back to the reign of Iaroslav Volodymyrovych, the Wise, the son of St. Volodymyr (or Vladimir, in Russian), who famously converted Rus to Christianity. The code survives only in far later copies, with the oldest dating to the fifteenth century. Whether it actually was written during Iaroslav's reign remains an open question. Most likely it underwent alterations in subsequent centuries, so it cannot be taken as a direct reflection of an eleventh-century original. Still, there is compelling evidence to support the idea that such codes were composed quite early and were in circulation by the later medieval period.[30] The historian Daniel Kaiser points out that the imprint of Rus church statutes is seen in legal charters drawn up in regional principalities in the later Middle Ages, testifying to the fact that "by the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, Rus society gave great currency to these statutes."[31]

The statute bears witness to a division of jurisdiction between grand princely and ecclesiastical powers, with the Church assuming responsibility for matters of marital and sexual relations as well as witchcraft, although this matter arises only in one solitary article out of the code's fifty-nine articles, and only in regulating the conduct of a husband whose wife is found to practice magic. This early code is intriguing in that it presumes a

practitioner of witchcraft to be female, which is quite at odds with the Russian trial records of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and because it situates witchcraft among sexual violations.

In order to give a sense of the context in which this statute arises, we provide a selection of other passages from the code as well as the one, article 40, that pertains to witchcraft.

Most of the fines specified in this and other Rus codes are assessed in *grivnas*, a unit of currency and of weight. It could take the form of a bar of silver or other metal, or a set weight or number of marten furs, or other equivalents in goods.

This is the Statute of Iaroslav [on] Hierarchs' Courts

1. Lo I, Grand Prince Iaroslav, son of Volodimir [ca. 980–1015], following [the example of] my father's gift, have consulted with Ilarion [1051–54], Metropolitan of Kiev and All Rus, [and] we have compared [readings in the] Greek nomocanon; since a prince, or his boyars, or his judges ought not have jurisdiction over these suits, I have given to the Metropolitan and bishops [jurisdiction over the following]: divorce [cases] in all towns; the customs duty each tenth week [is to go] to the church and the Metropolitan; and his people are not to pay the customs duty anywhere, nor the duty levied on goods entering a town; and I have given [the church the revenue from] the "eighth" [exacted from weighed goods brought into town for trade].

3. If someone rapes a boyar's daughter or a boyar's wife, [then he is to pay] five grivnas of gold for the dishonor, and the same amount to the Metropolitan; [if someone rapes the daughter or wife] of lesser boyars [then he is to pay] one grivna of gold, and a grivna of gold to the Metropolitan; [if someone rapes the daughter or wife] of well-to-do people [he is to pay] two rubles, and two rubles to the Metropolitan; [if someone rapes the daughter or wife] of common people [he is to pay] twelve grivnas of fur, and twelve grivnas of fur to the Metropolitan, and the prince punishes [him].

16. If someone engages in intercourse with his sister [he is to pay] the Metropolitan forty grivnas, and [fulfill] the prescription of penance according to the law.

18. If someone marries two wives, [he is to pay] the Metropolitan twenty grivnas, and whichever is false [i.e., the second wife], take her into a convent, and [the man] is to keep and maintain the first wife according to the law. If he keeps and treats her badly, punish him.

20. If a Jew or Muslim [takes] a Rus woman [to marriage], or [if some] other [non-Orthodox] foreigner [takes a Rus woman], [he is to pay] the Metropolitan fifty grivnas; and take the Rus woman into a convent.

21. If someone has intercourse with a nun, [he is to pay] the Metropolitan forty grivnas, and assign [him] penance.

22. If someone copulates with an animal, [he is to pay] the Metropolitan twelve grivnas, and [execute] penance and punishment according to the law.

23. If a father-in-law engages in intercourse with his daughter-in-law, [he is to pay] the Metropolitan forty grivnas, and they shall take penance according to the law.

24. If someone falls into fornication with two sisters, [he is to pay] the Metropolitan thirty grivnas.

40. If a woman be a maker of charms, or a witch, or a pagan sorceress, or a maker of potions, then her husband, having caught her [doing these things], is to punish her but is not to separate from her, and the Metropolitan is [to be paid] six grivnas (editors' emphasis).

41. If two men fight like women, either tearing at the skin [with their nails] or biting, [they are to pay] the Metropolitan twelve grivnas [of fur] or one grivna [of gold].

Russian Orthodox penitential listings involving sorcery and magic (fourteenth–early nineteenth centuries)

Sources: M. V. Korogodina, *Ispoved' v Rossii v XIV–XIX vv.: Issledovanie i teksty* (St. Petersburg: Dmitrii Bulanin, 2006), 409–11, 416, 423–24, 428–31, 441, 447, 453, 457, 465–66, 476–77, 482–83, 486, 488, 490; S. I. Smirnov, *Materialy dlia istorii drevnerusskoi pokaiannoi distsipliny (Teksty i zametki)*, *ChOIDR,* 1912, bk. 3, part 2, 49, 47, 65, 127–28, 152; Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989), 283–84; Elena B. Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics: Popular Religiosity and 'Spiritual Crimes' in Eighteenth-Century Russia," trans. Liv Bliss, *Russian Studies in History* 45, no. 4 (2007): 36–37; and W. F. Ryan's nonliteral translation of A. Kh. Vostokov, *Opisanie russkikh i slovenskikh rukopisei Rumiantsevskogo muzeuma* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imp. Akad. nauk, 1842), 551–52, in *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999), 31–32.

According to dictionary definitions based on western Christian practices, a penitential is "a book containing in codified form the canons of the Church on the hearing of confessions and the imposition of appropriate penances; a manual for priests hearing confessions." *The Oxford English Dictionary* notes the term's Latin derivation and prefaces its definition with the label "Ecclesiastical Law." Although penitentials were widely used in early modern Russia, the situation was far less stable and not formal

enough to pass as something we might recognize as "Law." Penitentials in early modern Muscovy were not standardized. Written by monks and clerics, they circulated in manuscript form. They were usually listed in Books of Needs (*trebniki*, which contained either the full series of rites or only those that a priest needed to carry out his responsibilities) or the larger Service Books (*sluzhebniki*). Father-confessors copied out penitential questions and suggested penances from a variety of sources, which means that they created their individual lists of questions and penances according to their own preferences and concerns. The practice of choosing texts from many sources continued even after published penitentials became available in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This is a reminder that penitential texts functioned in practice more like guidelines for appropriate or inappropriate behavior than like laws or even set collections of rules or prohibitions.[32]

Priests turned to penitentials to guide them in probing the potential sins of their "spiritual children." As father-confessors, priests were urged to pose uncomfortable questions about all sorts of possible forms of transgression and to leave no stone unturned. At the same time, they were cautioned not to go too far in suggesting new, innovative violations that might lead the curious to dangerous experimentation. They were instructed to employ particular delicacy when hearing the confessions of girls and maidens, who could so easily be led astray.

Despite their awareness of the dangers in planting ideas (something akin to the movement to prevent frank discussion of the facts of life in sex ed. classes today), priests assembled descriptions of some quite jaw-dropping forms of debauchery among their leading questions. In *ponovleniia*, or lists of exemplary sins that were read aloud to guide confessions, and *voprosniki*, collections of questions that confessors should ask, we encounter startling templates for possible confessions like the following, a text directed to female confessors: "I thought sinfully of nuns and priests and deacons and all kinds of people and livestock: of horses and dogs and pigs…. I fornicated with girls and women and I mounted them and I let them fornicate with me. And I kissed them on the lips and on their breasts and their private parts with desire until moisture flowed." Or this one, which similarly lists a remarkable conjuncture of assorted sins to be committed at once or by the same licentious individual: "And with my close relatives I fornicated with sodomy, and mounted them, and let them mount me, and let them to enter me from my back, and into my anus, too, and I put my tongue into their mouth, and I put my tongue into their wombs, and asked to do the same to me. And I let them suck milk from my breasts and I kissed their private parts and I let them do the same to me. And I committed these abominations with my husband and with other people.[33]" These are fascinating texts indeed. They offer access if not to the colorful sex lives of early modern Russians, then to the vibrant imaginations of the priests who compiled (and savored) these catalogs.

Given our thematic focus, most of the items listed below illustrate the types of questions and penances having to do not with sexual depravity but rather with sorcery, witchcraft, and magic. These infractions, of course, are reflected in a small minority of penitential questions. They too required tact on the part of the priest, who had to avoid introducing the alluring prospect of witchcraft to susceptible minds, particularly those of women, for whom special sets of questions were devised. We highlight those entries

concerned with magic and witchcraft here, but also include a sampling of those, marked with two asterisks (**), that have nothing to do with sorcery in order to provide some context.

After hearing confessions, priests were charged with assigning forms of penance. Penitents would humbly atone for their transgressions and would receive additional penalties depending on the nature of their sins. They might be temporarily excommunicated by being barred from the communion cup (taking of the "holy gifts") for a set period of time, or they might be relegated to stand outside the church doors or in the entry hall of the church rather than being allowed into the sanctuary. They might be consigned to supervision, hard labor, and prayer at a monastery or simply ordered to perform certain numbers of prayers and prostrations. Since penances varied greatly, they were not written down as frequently as the penitential questions themselves.

In the eighteenth century, beginning in the reign of Peter the Great, the authority to assign penance in crimes against church and state, including witchcraft and sedition, became a site of fierce struggle between religious and secular institutions. In the *1722 Supplement to the Spiritual Regulation* Bishop Feofan Prokopovich quotes a number of ancient church fathers on the subject of penance. He relies on their authority to assert the prerogative of the bishops rather than secular authorities to determine the precise terms of a penance after examining the crime from all angles.[34] Nonetheless, and in blatant contradiction of the church fathers whom he cites and in disagreement with other Russian Orthodox bishops, Prokopovich favored a radical reassignment of the power to impose penance in crimes against church and state, among them witchcraft and sedition. He backed Peter's move to intercede in religious affairs by appropriating the right to assign penance for the secular courts, making penance yet another tool of secular control. This fit with a Petrine impulse to disrupt the sanctity of confession: Petrine laws turned any confessions with potentially treasonous implications into reportable information, obligatorily passed on to the state. As was often the case with such pronouncements, they were rarely enforced.

The struggle between church and state over the right to impose penance in cases of witchcraft, and the meaning of those penitential acts, remained tense through the eighteenth century.[35] See further discussion in Document 3.13.

The excerpts below come from twenty-four separate penitential listings; they are arranged in chronological order.

First half of the fourteenth century penances designed specifically for the grand princes or for the confessor of one of the grand princes–from a *Trebnik* (Book of Needs)

**fifteen days of bread and water for a feast that produced laughter and dancing and shouting during fasting periods.

**fifteen days of bread and water for not giving a beggar alms, when you had some.

three years of bread and water for going to a sorcerer for soothsaying, or bringing him to your home.

three years for drinking a potion in order to beget a child.

eight weeks of bread and water for having washed with milk and honey and having given it to someone to drink to acquire favor (*See Document 2.3. for an instance of this in practice*).

five years for having put charms in either drink or food.

two years for having said profane or comical words over sacred texts, which should be revered, and having reversed the words of sacred texts for games.

**three years for the Sodomite sin; three years for lying with a man; three years for masturbating oneself or another.

Turn-of-the-fifteenth-century penitential from a *Sluzhebnik* (Service Book)

Questions for men

Did you go to a sorcerer?

Did you order a potion to be administered?

Questions for women

Did you go to a sorcerer?

Did you give someone a potion … to beget a child?

Did you drink a potion, wanting children?

Late fifteenth-century penitential from a *Trebnik*

Question for men

Did you go to a sorcerer or bring him to your home?

Questions for women

Did you go to a sorcerer … during a fast or bring soothsayers into your home?

Did you wash with milk and honey and give it to someone to acquire favor?

A collection of penitentials from the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries

Anyone who goes to sorcerers for soothsaying or obtains enchanted talismans should not eat meat and milk for forty days; after that, bread and water for two years, and the wearing of ashes for five years—for forsaking divine help and turning to a demon for enchanting pleasures. And if anyone brings sorcerers to his home and believing in charms, profits from a demon's help, he should repent for two years, with three hundred prostrations a day, for having forsaken his faith and having gone over to a false faith.

Fifteenth- to sixteenth-century collection of penitentials

Whoever prays to Satan or to his names should be sentenced to five years on bread and water.

A penitential from the late fifteenth/first half of the sixteenth century advised priests to be on the lookout for

anyone who brings sacrifices to devils and heals sickness with charms (*charmi*) and talismans (*nauzy*); who uses scurrilous writings to drive away a demon named "Fever" (*triastsia*).

anyone who prays to devils for harm to people.

A sixteenth-century compilation of penitentials

If a person dies of poison, [the sinner] should repent for seven years, three of them on bread and water.

Whoever places a curse on another or prays to demons or gives them human names, five years on bread and water.

And for practicing sorcery and magic, according to St. Basil, a person shall be denied communion and must fast and shed tears of repentance for fifteen years. We follow this practice as well: no communion for three years, dry food and little of it, and in the ninth hour 8 and 200 prostrations (*i.e., 208*) a day so that he may be absolved of sin.

Sixteenth-century penitentials

Questions for men

Did you place a cross under your foot? (*Several penitentials recommended thirty years' penance as this practice equated to apostasy and devil worship.*)

Did you pray to demons at a well?

Trebnik from the second quarter of the sixteenth century

Penances for men

**Have you laughed in church? Twelve days' penance and a hundred prostrations a day.

Have you intended to go to a sorcerer? 3 years' penance and 129 prostrations a day.

**Have you committed Sodomite fornication or lain with a man? Three years' penance and seventy prostrations a day.

Penances for women

Have you gone to a sorcerer or brought your soothsayers into your home? Three years' penance and a hundred prostrations a day.

Have you washed yourself with oil or honey and having washed, given it to a person to eat or drink? One year's penance and three hundred prostrations a day.

Mid-sixteenth-century *Sluzhebnik*

For men

Have you gone to a sorcerer? A week's fast.

For women

Have you put spells on food? Two year's fast.

Mid-sixteenth-century *Trebnik*

For men

Have you washed with honey or milk, and have you given anyone a potion for the purpose of fornication or gaining favor?
Have you not foretold a meeting or told a fortune, or used a bird or roaches for divination?
Have you bewitched a person or animal to cause them death, or bewitched grain?
Have you not extracted a footprint? (*Footprints were thought to carry traces of the person who made them, so collecting dust or dirt from a footprint gave a magician access to the target.*)
If you don't have the knowledge, have you not ordered someone else to bewitch someone to death?
Have you not committed some type of sorcery?
Have you not gone to sorcerers or brought them to your house, and learned from them?
(No parallel questions for women).

Trebnik published in 1623

For men: Questions for those new to confession

Have you gone to a sorcerer or brought him to your place, or brought him to someone else's place, or do you yourself dabble in magic?
Have you not used magic and roots on women or maidens or adolescents to make them fornicate with you?

For women

Do not ask pure maidens the following question: Have you bewitched a girlfriend or anyone else?

Trebnik from the turn of the seventeenth century

For women

Have you given men or women anything unclean (*i.e., tainted by witchcraft*) to eat?
Have you gone to a sorcerer or brought one to your home?
Have you created potions for men or women or bewitched them to death?
Do you know any healing methods or soothsaying?

Trebnik from the first quarter of the seventeenth century

For women

Have you given anyone a dangerous potion or herb?
Have you expressed your own milk or collected your own sweat?
Have you poured honey and milk over yourself and then given it to someone to eat or drink for the purpose of love?
Have you given a love root to someone to eat?
Have you bitten anyone's hernias or swellings? (*Hernias and swellings were thought to be "tied on" to people by hostile sorcerers but could be "bitten off" by magical healers.*)
Have you dabbled in magic?
Have you brought a sorcerer to your home?

Penitential from the first third of the seventeenth century

For women

Have you gone to sorcerers or brought them to your home?

Do you yourself know soothsaying and bewitching, have you learned words for either good or evil, or have you learned how to dabble in magic?

Have you bewitched children in yourself (*i.e., have you aborted fetuses*), or with a friend administered deadly poison in someone's drink or food?

Have you put your own milk or sweat into food or drink and given it to anyone?

Have you removed fungus from rye?

Have you bewitched the milk of someone else's cow?

Have you not bewitched grain, people, and livestock?

Have you given the honey or milk you washed yourself with to your husband or someone else to drink?

Trebnik from the first half of the seventeenth century

For widows

Have you gone to sorcerers or brought them to your home?

Do you know how to carry out sorcery?

Have you drunk [magic] potions to induce lactation and not said prayers [for forgiveness]?

Trebnik published in 1626

For men

Have you knowledge of sorcery and witchcraft (*potvory*), and have you bewitched someone?

Have you gone to a sorcerer to ask for something or brought one to your home?

For women

Have you poisoned anyone?

Have you gone to a sorcerer or a woman healer?

Do you have knowledge of sorcery?

Trebnik published in 1651

For monks

**Did you not transgress your monastic vow?
**Did you not defile your monastic form?
**As a monk, did you not fall with someone, either with women, or with maidens, or with nuns, skhimnitsy (*a rank above a nun*), or with widows, or with priests' wives, or with deacons' wives, or with youths, or with clean animals or with unclean animals?
Did you not destroy maidens' virginity by rape or sorcery?
**Did you not defile someone with fornication, while he slept or was drunk?

(Canon law viewed sexual intercourse between a monk and a nun to be incest.)

Trebnik published in 1720

Tell me, my child: Have you ever cast charms or, while performing wizardry, poured wax or tin, have you ever brought a wizard into your home and bade him cast charms or done such yourself; or have you ever performed wizardry to anyone's detriment; have you ever placed a charm (*a magical talisman*) on any animal lest a wolf carry it off, … have you ever placed a charm on a husband and wife, or have you caused a malady through enchantment, and have you worn protective amulets?

And if he has done such a thing or if it has been done on his behalf by others, he shall be barred [from communion] for six years, for thus the rule commands. But if a practitioner (*a sorcerer or wizard*) shall effect such things, he shall be barred as if he were a murderer—that is, for twenty years —as Basil the Great has declared.

A mid-eighteenth-century penitential listing of "accursed practices"

(The bracketed unitalicized text reflects Ryan's commentary in his original translation.)

- burying gold [i.e., the Yuletide game with an element of divination]
- playing blind man's buff**
- listening at thresholds and windows [i.e., a popular form of marital prospect divination]
- smearing one's face with soot [i.e., engaging in the Christmas season masquerades]
- wetting one's head with cloths**
- beating with cloth twists [i.e., a game]**
- playing musical instruments**
- playing chess, dice, or cards
- (*reading palms*) or letting a magician look at your own or your children's (*palms*) [i.e., chiromancy—not a practice recorded in Russia before the eighteenth century]
- rubbing with salt or ointment or turpentine or oil or mercury or human blood or human or animal milk or honey or dew or tar or hops [various medical or magical procedures with or without magical spells attached]
- listening to thunder [(*divination by thunder, or*) … the direction from which the thunder came was used to make a prediction, or perhaps the magical practice of seeking to bathe during a thunderstorm …]
- rolling in the snow [a marital prospect divination]
- carrying water in a sieve [sieves are commonly used in divination…. The task of carrying water in a sieve is given to simpleton heroes or devils in a number of folk stories.]
- listening to dogs or cats or geese or ducks or horses or oxen (believing in the following omens:)
- a mouse eats your trousers (clothes) [this distinctive omen alerts us to the fact that a good number of the omens here are taken from the *Volkhovnik* or "Book of the Wizard"]
- a moth spoils your clothes
- a mouse builds its nest high in the corn [an omen that corn prices will be high]
- the bones aching and the back of the knee itching means a journey

- the palms itching means money
- the eyes itching means tears to come
- meeting various animals and birds
- the hut creaks, the fire crackles, the forest murmurs and tree scrapes against tree, squirrels jump
- performing magic over livestock with stones and iron and frying pans and icons
- going to wizards and heretics and impious old women and witches who perform magic on St. John's Night [i.e., (*believed to be*) one of the most magical times of the year]
- bathing with herbs in the bathhouse [a practice associated in particular with magic(*al*) midsummer herbs gathered on the feast of Agrafena-Kupalnitsa—June 23]
- cutting off the first hair of children … **
- pregnant women giving bread to a bear: if it growls she will have a girl; if it is silent, a boy
- divining with a key in a psalter

(*For any of these "accursed practices"*: a penance of six years and a hundred prostrations a day.)[36]

Early nineteenth-century penitential

For men

Have you not learned at any time about sorcery and soothsaying?
Have you not had friendships or encounters with sorcerers and soothsayers?
Did you not ask them for help?
Did you not receive any roots of herbs or other substances for some benefit or medicine, and have you not held onto them?

The *Domostroi*: A household handbook of the mid-sixteenth century

Source: Adapted from Carolyn Johnston Pouncy, ed. and trans., *The "Domostroi": Rules for Russian Households in the Time of Ivan the*

Terrible (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994), 111–13, 117–20. Reprinted with permission of Cornell University Press.

The *Domostroi*, literally the "(proper) structuring" or "ordering of a home," was a household handbook composed in Moscow in the mid-sixteenth century, possibly by the priest Sylvester, a prominent cleric at the court of Ivan the Terrible. Directed to male heads of prosperous urban households, it discusses every aspect of pious household management, from maintaining appropriate deference to God, tsar, and social hierarchy to brewing fermented drinks and making proper use of worn-out clothing by reusing rags. It is famous for its ringing endorsement of patriarchal power. Male heads of household are instructed to maintain order and to assert their dominance by judicious beatings of their wives, sons, and servants, although they are cautioned to do so with a sense of tact (in private, so as not to cause undue humiliation) and within reason (stopping short of maiming or murdering).

The work guides its readers to avoid magic, divination, and using any approach to healing other than the approved methods of prayer and saintly intervention. The text denounces such practices using a catchall set of terms: they are called pagan, sinful, and devil-inspired. The *Domostroi* deplores the temptation to consult learned astrological texts such as *Rafli* or *Six Wings*, or to indulge in other modes of prognostication, and the problem of wives who consult magicians or, worse still, invite them into their homes. Presumably the temptation to consult forbidden books was considered to be a risk for literate men, while the urge to invite magician healers into the home was ascribed more to women, responsible for the health and safety of their children and other family members. The handbook does not seem to differentiate in its condemnation between hiring sorcerers and practicing sorcery oneself. These same dangers are addressed in the proceedings of the Stoglav Church Council (see Document 3.4), which took place at approximately the same time that this text was written.

Chapter 23. How Christians should heal themselves of illness and every affliction. This applies to tsars, princes, chancellery personnel, bishops, priests, monks, and all other Christians

Someone who is indifferent and dishonorable has no fear of God and does not do God's will, observes neither Christian law nor the traditions of the church fathers, does not rejoice in God's church, church services, the monastic rule, prayer, or singing praise to God. He eats and drinks without restraint and at improper times. He does not maintain a lawful life: he fornicates on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, on holy days, during Lent, on the Virgin's Day, and at other times when it is forbidden. Contrary both to nature and to law, such men lust after women who are not their wives,

commit Sodom's sin or any abomination detested by God. This includes lechery, unchastity, disgusting speech, the singing of Devil-inspired songs accompanied by bells and trumpets, all Devil-pleasing acts, and all forms of dishonor deserving of God's wrath. Here belong sorcery, witchcraft, amulets, astrology, *Rafli* (*an astrological work*), almanacs (*astrological and numerological works*),[37] black magic, crow-cawing,[38] *The Six Wings*,[39] thunder arrows, axeheads, amulets to prevent illness and fever, pebbles, magic bones, or by means of any other Devil-inspired art. Here, too, are included anyone who tries to defeat death with sorcery, herbs, roots, or grasses; anyone who is too indulgent to insist that others fast at the appropriate time;[40] anyone who, by interpreting dreams or through soothsaying, makes magic, praises the Devil, or promotes evil and adultery; anyone who swears falsely in God's name or who slanders another. From all such deeds, customs, and mores grow pride, hatred, wicked grudges, anger, enmity, offense, lying, theft, swearing, wicked speech, sorcery, witchcraft, ridicule, blasphemy, gluttony, drunkenness, eating early and late in the day, evil deeds of all sorts, lechery, and impurity. The good man who loves people but does not hold God in his heart will be counted with those who hold to these wicked customs and who indulge themselves in any way….

Ruling No. 61 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, on wizards and sorcerers: If you encounter sorcerers, so-called wise men, magi, or others of this ilk or those who frequent them, punish them according to the commandment of the holy fathers, the ruling in the canon, by banishing them from church for six years. You should punish in the same way those who drag bears, or any other kind of animal, around to amuse simple folk and those who offer others lustrations, interpretations of their birth or heritage, or advice based on astrology or other forms of folk magic. If you have any of those they call cloud-dispatchers,[41] spell-casters, makers of talismans, or sorcerers living among you, who do not abjure their destructive pagan deeds, throw them out of the church altogether, as the holy commandments enjoin. As the apostle [Paul] said, "Can light consort with darkness? Can Christ agree with Belial, or a believer join hands with an unbeliever? Can there be a compact between the temple of God and the idols of the heathen?[42]

To repeat: People who use destructive charms, who frequent sorcerers and wizards, who invite such to their houses—wanting to use them to see something unspeakable—who feed and keep bears, dogs, or hawks, for hunting or for the amusement and delight of simple folk, those who believe in lustrations, in the power of birth or heritage, as said above, or in horoscopes and forecasts based on the stars, those who say they can drive the clouds away—all such must be ordered banished from the church for six years, then to stand for four years among those who must prostrate themselves, and for two years more among the faithful. Only then can they receive communion. If they are unrepentant, and do not give up these cunning pagan ways even after their banishment, then they must be cut off completely from the church. The hallowed fathers and teachers of the church spoke about sorcerers and wizards, including, among others, St. John Chrysostom. He said, "As for sorcerers and those who cast spells: if you wish to call on the name of the Holy Trinity, if you are one who makes the sign of Christ's holy cross, you must utterly forsake such people."

Ruling No. 24 by the Synod of Ancyra:[43] He who works magic or follows pagan customs, or who allows anyone who does so to enter his house, whether just as an experiment or because he intends to use their services, according to the canon shall be banished from communion for five years. In the commandments, this is broken into steps: three years prostration; two years in prayer, without the oblation.

To repeat: You must expose anyone who gives himself over to sorcerers, herbalists, or other practitioners of magic and who invites them to his house, for these wicked ones will execute their desires through him. If someone has been healed through sorcery, find and exorcise him, for by evil he was more evilly healed. All such people should be cast out of the church for three years; for two years more they should stand and pray, yet remain excommunicate. At the end of five years, they may again partake of communion.

Ruling No. 61 of the Sixth Council, the one in the Trullus Palace…[44]

Ruling No. 82 of St. Basil the Great:[45] Those who invite sorcerers into their lives, or bring such to their children, are murderers, and must be

banned. To repeat: Anyone who places himself in the hands of sorcerers, wizards, or shamans in order to learn their evil ways shall be considered as having the will to murder and be excommunicated. Those who believe in wizards and enter their homes, to be purged from poison or for elucidation of some unspeakable rite, shall be excommunicated for six years, as was commanded by the sixty-first ruling of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, the one that met in Constantinople in the Trullus Palace. This ruling is also number 93 in St. Basil the Great's epistle.

3.2 EXCERPTS FROM CHARLES V'S 1532 *CONSTITUTIO CRIMINALIS CAROLINA* AND THE 1559 POLISH VERSION

Code *Carolina*

Source: This translation is informed by David Pickering, *Cassell Dictionary of Witchcraft* (London: Cassell, 1996); Wolfgang Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria: Popular Magic, Religious Zealotry, and Reason of State in Early Modern Europe*, trans. J. C. Grayson and David Lederer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 172; John H. Langbein, *Prosecuting Crime in the Renaissance: England, Germany, France* (Clark, NJ: Lawbook Exchange, 2005), 279, 281; and H. C. Eric Midelfort, "Heartland of the Witchcraze," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (London: Routledge, 2001), 116.

Concerning sufficient indication of witchcraft

Article 44. If anyone presumes to teach others witchcraft; or if he misleads people into bewitching and in addition brings those he has deceived to effect bewitchment; also if he has associated with witches, either male or female; or goes about with such suspect things, deeds, word, and manners

which are signs of witchcraft; and, moreover, if he has a bad reputation of similar sort; those indications give just proof of witchcraft and sufficient grounds for torture.

When the examined person confesses to witchcraft

Article 52. When someone confesses to witchcraft, he shall also be questioned about the causes and circumstances as above, and moreover, with what, how, and when the witchcraft occurred—with what words or deeds. Further, if the person examined states that he hid or held on to something that allegedly facilitated the witchcraft, then there shall be an attempt to find it; if, however, the said witchcraft was committed with other things through word or deed, then they too shall be investigated to see whether they are infected with witchcraft. The person shall also be asked from whom he learned such witchcraft, and how it came about; whether he also employed such witchcraft against other people, and against whom, and what damage thus occurred.

Punishments for witchcraft

Article 109. When someone harms people or brings trouble unto them by witchcraft, one should punish him with death by fire. When, however, someone uses witchcraft and yet does no one any harm with it, he should be punished otherwise, according to the magnitude of the crime, and the judges should take counsel as is described later regarding legal consultations.

These guidelines are taken from the royal laws which King Charles V ordered published in all his domains (1559)

Source: Bartłomej Groicki, *Ten postępek wybran jest z praw cesarskich* (Cracow: Lazarus Andreae impresit, 1565), 12rev–13, 17. Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa.

Article 14. Evidence against witches and all those who occupy themselves with witchcraft and sorcery

When it is claimed that someone wants to teach others such things (*i.e., witchcraft*); or that someone threatens to use witchcraft against another person and something befalls the threatened individual; or that someone is suspected of it on the basis of words, gestures, behavior, and other deeds peculiar to such people and used by such people for which they become notorious, such a person ought to be accused; and on the basis of such signs may be condemned to torture, since all such knowledge is against the Lord God; and it is inappropriate for Christians to occupy themselves with it; it is forbidden by law and severely punished.

Article 22. When one confesses to [committing] sorcery or witchcraft during torture

He has to be asked about the reasons, conditions, and circumstances [for using] the above-mentioned [sorcery or witchcraft]; also which implements were used, in what manner, and at what time or what words were said, [and] what was done: in the event that he says that the charms or other similar things are hidden somewhere or buried in the ground, an interrogation must be initiated and one has to search thoroughly to be sure that such things can be found. If these objects are found, the sorcerer has to be asked which words he uttered and how he used them.

Accordingly, the person also has to be asked who taught him such things, in what way did he acquire this knowledge, how many times, against whom [was it used], or what harm was done to another.

3.3 PROCEDURES FOR THE COURTS AND AFFAIRS OF TOWNS UNDER MAGDEBURG LAW UNDER THE POLISH CROWN (1559)

Source: Bartłomej Groicki, *Porządek sądów i spraw miejskich prawa majdeburskiego* (Cracow: Lazarus Andreae impresit, 1566), 128, 126.

Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa.

About various manners of execution for various criminals

The following executions for criminals are mentioned in *Spec. Saxon.* book II, art. 13.16.36, in particular: thieves are to be hanged. Traitors, robbers, looters are to be broken on the wheel. Murderers, rapists of virgins, and those who were apprehended during the act of adultery must be beheaded…. The abjurer of the Christian faith must be burned. Witches and the individuals who supply poison should die similarly.

About various tortures

Also, sometimes when one is to be tortured, he should first have all of his hair shaved in order to discover if he has some elaborate objects connected to sorcery or some witchcraft, which can prevent him from feeling any pain.

3.4 QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM THE MOSCOW CHURCH COUNCIL (*STOGLAV*) OF 1551

Sources: *Stoglav* (St. Petersburg: D. E. Kozhanchikov, 1863), 135–41, 261–67; http://sidashtaras.ru/img/dejania_stoglava_1551.pdf, 41–43, 85–87.

In 1551, a great council of all the leaders and important figures of the Russian Orthodox Church gathered in Moscow to discuss issues of pressing importance. Those attending the Stoglav Council formulated their positions on policy, theology, and practice as a series of questions and answers. The discussions covered a great number of topics (101, to be precise), including problems such as drunken, barefooted priests; shaving of beards and mustaches; improper observation of religious holidays; and remarriage. Only a small fraction of the chapters touch on witchcraft and sorcery, but they reveal an insistent concern and they show the nexus of sins that the churchmen worried about in connection with witchcraft. Magic, deception, astrology, demonry, false prophesy, paganism, "Hellenic" practices, working on the Sabbath, singing in church: these all form the universe of infractions in which sorcery was thought to dwell. The role of the "satanic"

or the "demonic" in these condemnations is interesting to consider. Muscovy did not develop a strong link between Satan and witchcraft, but these terms do arise in the Stoglav condemnations, allowing us to ponder how devilry and witchcraft intersect in their conceptual framework.

The council's deliberations were written up and the resulting "Book of One Hundred Chapters" is the source of the following excerpts. The tsar, Ivan IV, attended the council, entered into the discussion, and lent his weight to supporting its positions. His 1552 decree (see Document 3.5) on witchcraft may be understood as a direct follow-up to the council's condemnation of witchcraft, and even repeats some of the language of the Stoglav's text. While the Stoglav itself is not technically a law code, it acted as a regulatory book for the Church and inspired a decree, which in Muscovy had much the same status as a law, although without any guarantee of consistent application.

The teachings of the Stoglav became a fundamental guide for the Church for the next century. When it was superseded by newer approaches in the second half of the seventeenth century, its tradition was appropriated by the Old Believers, who broke with the official church precisely because of its turn away from the tenets of the Stoglav and of Muscovite Russia.

As elsewhere in this collection, we have included the headings of articles not directly related to sorcery as they occur. Scattered among questions devoted to witchcraft, these seemingly unrelated concerns about mixed bathing, criminal gangs, and folk rituals understood as pagan or "Hellenic" show the multiple contexts in which church leaders considered the problem of magic. The Stoglav reiterates the positions of the Byzantine Sixth Ecumenical Council of 680–81 CE in condemning specific pagan rites, such as worshipping the Greek god Dionysus or leaping over fires in celebration of the festival of Kalends. Since these particular rituals were condemned nearly a millennium before the Stoglav and in a distant part of the world far more immersed in ancient Greek ways than Russia was, it is useful to approach the descriptions of these supposed folk celebrations with a hefty dose of skepticism. It seems most unlikely that Eastern Slavs in the mid-sixteenth century were indulging in the same celebrations as seventh-century Greeks.

Chapter 41

Question 16

At lay people's weddings mummers and performers and clowns and players of psalters (*stringed instruments of the zither family*) perform and sing demonic songs. And when they go to church to be married, the priest will be there with a cross and before him they make a terrible din with all those devilish toys. And the priests should forbid this.

Answer

Skomorokhi (minstrels) and mummers are not to go to weddings in churches of God, and priests should forbid it with strong prohibitions, so such disorder should never take place.

Question 17

And in our tsardom Christians litigate falsely and kiss the cross or images of the saints slanderously. And on the field of combat they fight and spill blood (*that is, they duel to determine the outcome of court cases*). And during such combats, sorcerers and magicians work magic learned from demonic teaching, and they look in (*forbidden astrological books such as*) *The Gates of Aristotle* or *Rafli* and they read the stars and the planets and they mark the days and hours, and with such devilish (*diavol'skie*) actions they corrupt the world and sever it from God. And trusting in such magic, slanderers fail to make peace and kiss the cross and fight on the field of combat, and having slandered, they kill.

And in answer to this

Most noble tsar, order that your commandment is to be carried out in the reigning city of Moscow and in all the cities of the Russian realm: regarding such sorcerers and magicians and those who look at *Rafli* and *The Gates of Aristotle* and read the stars and planets and corrupt the world using such devilish (*diavol'skie*) means and sever it from God and work any other such Hellenic (*pagan*) demonry and all such charms that are displeasing to God and condemned by the holy fathers—such heresies shall from this day forth and in the future be repudiated in full.

And whosoever tempts Orthodox Christians with such magical means among the people or in their homes or fields and then is identified, let them be held in deep disgrace by the tsar. And those who try to win Orthodox Christians over to their Hellenic demonic magic, let them be cast out and cursed according to the holy law.

Question 18: On mixed bathing (*omitted here*)

Question 19: On *skomorokhi* (minstrels) committing crimes in big groups (*omitted here*)

Question 20

Provincial landlords and service people and all sorts of revelers gamble with grain and drink themselves to drunkenness and fail to serve their mandatory service or to conduct their business.

And they commit all sorts of evil and they steal and rob and murder, and we should eliminate this evil.

Answer

Most noble tsar, order your commandment carried out in the reigning city of Moscow and in all the cities of the Russian realm: that provincial landlords and service people and all kinds of revelers should not gamble with grain and should not drink in taverns and should not commit other such evil, and should live like Christians and should be satisfied with their lot.

Question 21

In parishes and villages false prophets circulate, men and women and girls and old women, naked and barefoot, with their hair long and wild, shaking and hurting themselves, and they say that Saints Piatnitsa (*Friday*) and Nastasia (*Sunday*) appear to them and command them to preach the canons to Christians. They preach that it is forbidden to do manual labor on Wednesdays and Fridays, and women shouldn't spin or wash clothes and shouldn't light their stoves. Others preach other things not pleasing to God and not in the divine writings. What should be done with these naked and barefoot false prophets so that they don't corrupt the world?

Answer

Most noble tsar, order your commandment to be carried out in the reigning city of Moscow and in all the cities and districts and parishes and villages. Wherever such swindlers or false prophets turn up and disrupt the place

with their demonic seductions, repulsive to God, Orthodox Christians should pay no attention to them and should drive them from their homes and distance themselves from them. The holy apostles and holy fathers declared and commanded that people should work five days a week and on Saturday and on Sunday, they should attend to their prayers and observe the holy day.[46] Thus commanded the holy apostles and holy fathers: throughout the year people should fast on Wednesdays and Fridays and work on all tasks and should work with their hands and carry out the commandment according to sacred law. And if a bishop or presbyter or deacon or any kind of cleric or lay person does not fast during Lent and throughout the year on Wednesdays and Fridays, such a one should be excommunicated and Orthodox Christians should not listen to their preaching when alone with them.

And on Wednesdays and Fridays, people should not only fast but also maintain purity and work at their labors for the glory of God with all their strength.

Question 22

Of evil heretics who know and make use of *Rafli*, *Six Wings*, crow-cawing, astronomy, zodiacs, almanacs, astrology, *The Gates of Aristotle*, and other heretical accouterments and wisdom and demonic fortune-telling, who seduce people away from God and in those seductions cut many believing people off from God to perish.

Answer

Not only in the reigning city of Moscow but also in all the cities, the tsar should command, with all his awesome tsarist majesty, his commandment be carried out. And priests in their parishes in all towns should forbid with great spiritual prohibitions Orthodox Christians to keep such heretical books, so repulsive to God, or to read them. And whosoever has kept such heretical, forbidden books and read them or tempted others, those people should be punished by their spiritual fathers and henceforth should not keep such heretical, forbidden books nor read them. And whosoever in the future shall hold or read such books or tempt others to read them, they shall

be held in great disgrace by the most honorable tsar and punished. According to the holy laws, they will be excommunicated and cursed.

Question 23: On *skomorokhi* and dancing on graves and demonic games

On Trinity Saturday, in villages and parishes, men and women gather on funeral mounds (*zhal'niki*) and cry at the graves of the dead with great wailing. And as soon as the *skomorokhi* start to play their demonic games, the people cease their wailing, and the swindlers and deceivers begin to jump and dance and clap their hands and sing satanic (*sotonicheskie*) songs on those same funeral mounds.

Answer

All the priests in all towns and villages should teach Orthodox Christians that when it is time to commemorate their relatives they should give comfort to the poor and give as much charity as they are able and feed and comfort beggars. But they should forbid and prohibit *skomorokhi* and all kinds of mummers so that when they commemorate their ancestors Orthodox Christians should not be disturbed by such demonic games.

Question 24

On the holidays of Rusalia or St. John's Day (*Midsummer's Day*) and on Christmas Eve and on the eve of the Epiphany, men and women and girls gather for dancing and disorderly speech, for demonic songs and dancing and godless activities, and they do shameful things to boys and seduce girls and they carry on practically all the night through. The strong men carry them to the river with great shouting. They wash themselves with water like demons, and only when dawn breaks do they disperse to their homes and fall down like the dead from the great hullabaloo.

Answer

… Forbid such nocturnal dancing and disorderly speech and demonic songs and dancing and jumping and all such things that are repulsive to God. And

they shouldn't do such ancient, Hellenic demonry. They should stop once and for all, because the holy fathers forbade all Hellenic charms (*prelesti*) by their holy rules, and it is not fitting for Orthodox Christians to do such things. Instead they should honor the holidays and the saints and celebrate the glory of God.

Chapter 92

Of games of Hellenic demonry (*besnovanie*)

Out of foolishness many children of simple Orthodox Christians in cities and towns work Hellenic demonry: various games and dancing on the eve of the holiday of the Birth of Christ and of the holiday of the birth of John the Baptist at night and on all holidays men and women and children leave their homes and take to the streets and do mummery by the water and play all kinds of games and sing satanic songs and commit all kinds of indecencies similar to these, and on holy eves and the eve of the Transfiguration of the Lord and thereby they incur the Lord's wrath. They are not intimidated by prohibitions nor by being identified nor by punishment from priest or judge. They commit unseemly acts condemned by the holy fathers. Henceforth, instead of such devilry, it behooves Orthodox Christians to go to the holy and honorable churches of God on those holidays and to exert themselves in prayer and take pleasure in divine singing and to listen to holy writ attentively and to attend the sacred liturgy with terror and then to disperse themselves to their homes looking only to God with the [help of] the clergy and their spiritual friends, feeding the poor and rejoicing in giving glory to God and not drinking to the point of drunkenness.

Thus according to holy law and commandments of the holy apostles and holy fathers, Orthodox Christians should not participate in such Hellenic demonry in towns or villages, and of this the most honorable tsar's commandment should be carried out in all towns and villages that Orthodox Christians should not gather for such demonry and that cursed Hellenic demonry henceforth should be utterly extirpated.

The Sixth Holy Ecumenical Church Council rules 50 and 51 forbid any playing of games with grain (*this alludes to gambling by casting grain*) or

playing chess or using prognostication tables or any other such games by clerical or lay people. Forbid and reject such gaming and do not give yourself over to drunkenness. Drink is appropriate not in drunkenness, but many people drink in joy or in pain or in cruel suffering or many dull themselves because they are burdened with cares or in illness or infirmity….

Because of this all sacred writing and holy law forbid all kinds of games and grain and chess and tables and zithers (*smyki*) and pipes (*sopeli*) and all horn playing and mummery and shameful behavior and dancing. As the Lord says, "You who are laughing now will grieve and wail and cry." Another clergyman says, "If a bishop or presbyter or deacon or other member of the clergy plays games or goes to those who play or attend shameful events, he will be excommunicated from all divine services and will lose his food allotment and will be assigned for a time for repentance according to how much he needs to repent…. By God's mercy they will return to their ranks after three years excommunication and cleansing through repentance.

Chapter 93

Of that same Hellenic demonry and sorcery and enchantment

Rules 61 and 62 of the Sixth Holy Ecumenical Council of the Holy Fathers forbid going to sorcerers and forbid Orthodox Christians to take part in pagan, Hellenic practices, games, dancing and swaying over barrels and over large earthenware pots for kvass (*a fermented drink*), invocating and roaring and doing other unseemly things. If they continue in their pagan ways, if they go to sorcerers or charmers or invite such people to their homes, wanting to see them [do?] something unspeakable, feeding and keeping bears or other animals for mummery and in order to seduce and mislead simple folk, if they believe in Luck (*a form of prognostication*) and call it *Rozhanitsa* and in charm-workers and if they call themselves cloud-chasers, the holy council bars them from receiving the holy gifts (*communion*) for six years. For four years they should have to stand in the vestibule of the church, and for the remaining two years they may stand with the faithful. And then they may receive the holy gifts. But if they prove

incorrigible and refuse to abandon their Hellenic cunning as ordered, they should be barred from all churches everywhere….

Chrysostom says, "If someone works sorcery or charms and says the name of the Holy Trinity and calls on the saints and makes the sign of the cross, run away. It is appropriate to turn from them."

Of that same Hellenic demonry

That same rule 62 condemns the Hellenic [rites] of Kalandiia and Vot and Vrumaliia, as they are called in the Greek language. These holidays are celebrated on the first of each month and especially of March with great ceremony and much playing of games according to Hellenic custom. The council banned and prohibited playing any such games and female dancing among the people as being shameful. Such conduct corrupts many people to laughter and licentiousness. Also men and boys should not dress up in women's clothing and women should not array themselves in men's clothing, but each should wear their own clothing and should not wear inappropriate costumes or sing or dance or watch *skomorokhi*, or bleat like goats or weave fables. They scarcely will warm wine or pour wine into a vessel before they start a great, senseless howling and crying according to ancient Hellenic deceptions. They call the Hellenic god Dionysus, teacher of drunkenness, and they sweeten their taste and drunkenness multiplies. All this the holy council forbade.

All sorcery is prohibited by God in the name of the holy fathers because it is demonic service. Henceforth such things are forbidden and renounced and cursed.

3.5 IVAN IV'S 1552 LAW ON WITCHCRAFT

Source: *Akty istoricheskie*, *sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoiu kommissieiu,* vol. 1: *1334–1598* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Ekspeditsii zagotovleniia gosudarstvennykh bumag, 1841), no. 154, part. 2, 251–52.

After the Stoglav Church Council of 1551 (see Document 3.4) finished its work, the tsar, Ivan IV, issued a decree against disorderly conduct, including witchcraft, in the spirit of the churchmen's resolutions. Like the protocols of the council, it condemns those who patronize witches and sorcerers, not only the magical practitioners themselves. Later prohibitions on magic, chronicle accounts of events at court, and trial records from Muscovite and early imperial courts all confirm that clients who sought out the service of magical specialists were considered almost as culpable as the sorcerers themselves.

In the form in which it survives, this is a one-time decree rather than a law worked into a formally codified law code, and it is directed to two particular men with instructions to announce and enforce it only within the city of Moscow. This kind of one-time decree characterized much of Muscovite law. Sometimes we have evidence that similar decrees were distributed around the tsardom, because multiple documents survive conveying orders to different officials in different regions to announce new regulations in towns and marketplaces in their locales. See, for example, Document 3.9, for which we have multiple exemplars addressed to officials in various provinces. Ivan IV's decree, by contrast, survives only in this single copy, and is not referred to in later court cases or discussions. This is not unusual for sixteenth-century documents, since many perished in the fire that ravaged the Kremlin archives in 1626 or disappeared in other ways. Whether or not this particular decree was more widely disseminated at the time, because it confirmed the positions of the Stoglav, its intentions would have had been communicated through the widely copied and cited proceedings of the church council.

In the year 1552, the […] day of April, by the order of Tsar and Grand Prince Ivan Vasilevich, of All Russia, a memorandum was given to Andrei Bersenev and Khoziain Tiutin, saying that by the holy laws and in accordance with the Law Code (*of 1550*), people should not drink themselves into a state of drunkenness, nor take the Lord's name in vain, nor swear, and they should not falsely kiss the cross (*to swear an oath*), and they should enforce this through all of Moscow. And any priests and deacons who, forgetting the fear of God and scorning holy law and the tsar's covenant and the Law Code, frequent taverns and drink to a state of drunkenness, and who go around to homes and wander through the streets drunk, or use foul language or swear at someone with mother curses, setting a bad example for lay people or, while drunk, get into fights or brawls, they are to take those disorderly priests and deacons and monks and collect the tsar's penalty fees from them according to the custom of the land, just the way they would collect the tsar's fines from ordinary disorderly people and revelers, and they should send the monks to monasteries, to their archimandrites and hegumens, and they should be disciplined according to the monastic rule; and they should send such priests and deacons to their

clerical elders, and they should inform the prelate/hierarch (s*viatitel'*) about those disorderly people, and the prelate should correct them according to the priestly rule; and if it is not possible to collect a fine from a monk, then the fine should be imposed on the person who gives him alcohol to drink, and the monk should be sent to a monastery, and they should discipline him according to the monastic rule.

And according to the order of the tsar and grand prince, Andrei and Khoziain were ordered to cry out this news in marketplaces: Orthodox Christians, from the most humble to the greatest, should not take the name of God in vain in false oaths, and should not kiss the cross dishonestly, should not undertake any other inappropriate swearing of oaths. They should not swear with mother-curses, and should not insult each other with nasty words about their fathers and mothers, and they should not upbraid each other with any kind of vile, unseemly language. They should not shave their beards, nor cut them, and they should not cut their mustaches.

They should not go to sorcerers (*volkhvy*) or magicians (*charodei*) or astrologers (*zvezdochttsy*) for sorcery (*volkhvovati*), and they should not bring magicians to the fields (*where judicial duels took place to determine innocence and guilt*). And whatsoever insolent troublemakers, forgetting the fear of God and the tsar's penalties, swear falsely in the name of God, or deceitfully kiss the cross, or insult their fathers and mothers, and swear with vile words, or shave their beards or cut them, or cut their mustaches, or go to magicians or sorcerers or astrologers for sorcery, or bring magicians along to the fields of judicial duels, if someone informs on them and if the denunciation comes from trustworthy witnesses, let them be deemed in great disgrace by the tsar and grand prince according to the civil law (*gradskii zakon*), and placed in spiritual interdiction by the church hierarchs according to church rules.

3.6 1589 LAW ON THE HONOR OF WITCHES

Source: "Sudebnik 1589 g.," in Pamiatniki prava perioda ukrepleniia russkogo tsentralizovannogo gosudarstva,. XV–XVII vv. (Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe izdatel'stvo iuridicheskoi literatury, 1956), 419–21.

From the earliest times, law codes in the lands of Rus included lists of fines to be imposed for dishonoring people of various ranks. Dishonor could involve a range of offenses, from verbal attack to physical assault to impugning the reputation of someone's mother or family lineage. The fines also varied in accordance with the victim's standing. The Law Code or *Sudebnik* of 1589 was the third in a series of Muscovite legal compilations, following those of 1497 and 1550. Unlike the earlier two law codes that were drawn up in Moscow, this one appears to have been compiled in the Russian North, in the Dvina region. It was never promulgated on a wide scale if at all, although it was occasionally cited in other legal documents. We have not found any reference in court records to its protection of the honor of witches.

By definition, honor legislation protected the reputations of honorable people. It is odd, to say the least, to discover that this code lists witches among those entitled to legal recourse should they find themselves subject to assaults on their honor (see article 70). The historian Nancy Shields Kollmann argues that this kind of protection was essential to maintaining the moral consensus that undergirded the tsars' claim to legitimacy. By affirming the honor of each of his subjects, no matter how minimal that honor was, he enacted his role as divinely selected, pious ruler. Still, the concept of upholding the honor of witches remains a puzzle, particularly since the law stipulates that "robbers and bandits and arsonists and people known to be evil" should receive no compensation. Were witches not "bad people"?

We include here a handful of articles concerning crimes against honor in order to give a sense of how witches fit into a bigger picture. The list offers a nuanced picture of the strata of Muscovite society and how its constituent parts were viewed. It is noteworthy that a male "shrieker," or possessed person, also makes the list.

To gain a sense of the relative values assigned to various ranks and offenses, it is helpful to understand the basics of the (confusing) monetary system. After a monetary reform of 1534, the ruble was defined as equal in value to one hundred kopecks or two hundred *dengas* or four hundred *polushki*. One *altyn* was equal to three kopecks. One *grivna* was equal to ten kopecks or twenty *dengas*. Anton Seljak of the Money Museum in Moscow notes, "Although there were a whole series of names for the half, quarter or tenth of a rouble, the only actual coins in circulation were the *kopeyka* (kopek), the denga and the polushka…. In the course of the currency reform, the circulation of the old silver coins was prohibited. Until the middle of the 17th century the kopek was not only the highest-value unit, but also more or less the only one."[47]

Sudebnik of 1589

Article 41. And for dishonor of minor noblemen (*deti boiarskie*) who have the right to collect fees to support themselves in service (*kormlenie*): however much they collect yearly according to the books, so much should they receive for dishonor. And their wives should receive twice that amount.

Article 43. And for state secretaries of the chancelleries and palaces, they should receive whatever the tsar-sovereign commands, and their wives twice that amount.

Article 47. And an urban tradesman and all middling types should receive five rubles for dishonor, and their wives should receive twice that amount.

Article 50. For dishonor of an agricultural peasant—one ruble. And for his wife, two.

Article 61. And for dishonor of a priest, he should receive however much the church takes in as income from the parish, and for his wife, twice that.

Article 64. And for a widow, or a girl, or a beggar, the widows and beggars should receive dishonor payments equivalent to their holdings, and a girl should receive the same payment as a nun.

Article 65. And for a registered minstrel (*skomorokh*),[48] two rubles for dishonor, but to his wife, nothing.

Article 66. And for an unregistered minstrel, one *grivna* for dishonor, and to his wife, double.

Article 68. And to an urban male beggar-shrieker (*nishchii klikun*) in the city of Moscow, for dishonor eight *altyn*, two *dengi*.

Article 69. And to bastards, who were born to unmarried women, for them, for dishonor two *dengi* because of their mother's occupations.

Article 70. And to prostitutes (*bliadi*) and female witches (*vidmy*), two *dengi* for dishonor, because of their occupations.

Article 71. And to robbers and bandits and arsonists and people known to be evil (*razboiniki, zazhigalshchiki, vedomye likhie liudi*), no dishonor payments, because they are evil people.

3.7 1648 DECREE AGAINST DEVILISH CONDUCT

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Belg. stol, stlb. 298, 1648–51, ll. 377–80.

In the Muscovite era, the Russian calendar still counted the year from the supposed moment of Creation. Further, the new year began on September 1, so events dated to a particular year from the Creation ran across two of our present calendar years. Events taking place between September 1 and December 31 would be dated to the previous year according to our system. So, for instance, events dated to the year 7157 might take place in the last three months of our year 1648 or in the first nine months of 1649. To complicate matters further, Russians did not adopt Arabic numbers until the reforms of Peter the Great, so they used an alphanumeric system whereby the number 1 was represented by the letter A. The year 7157 would be represented with the Cyrillic letters ѧ3РН3, with the initial letter marked with the slashed diagonal line to show that it indicated the number of thousands.

The 1648 decree echoed some of the concerns voiced by the Stoglav Church Council and set in law by Ivan IV's 1552 ruling. In the 1648 decree, Aleksei Mikhailovich also drew on the more recent precedent of a pronouncement issued in December 1627 during the reign of his father, Tsar Mikhail Fedorovich, by the patriarch, Filaret.[49] The patriarch's decree condemned the same folk practices named here, but it did not mention witchcraft or sorcery explicitly. The fact that the 1627 order was issued by the patriarch underscores the ambiguity of jurisdiction over unauthorized folk practice and magic, matters of concern to both religious and secular authorities.

The document mentions Koliada several times. Koliada was a folk festival, observed during the weeks before and after Christmas and through the beginning of January, when groups of young people went from house to house singing sometimes obscene songs, sometimes songs that verged on fertility spells, often wearing masks and costumes, exchanging congratulations, and collecting gifts of money and food. It was strongly associated with witchcraft. It evidently derived from the Greek precedent, Kalends, decried in the Stoglav and elsewhere.

Year 7157 (1648) on December 21. By the order of Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia (*that is, roughly, present-day Russia, Ukraine, and Belorussia*) to State Secretary (*d'iak dumnyi*) Ivan Gavrenev and to Grigorii Larionov: In this year 7157 on December 19, during the vespers services celebrating the Nativity of Christ, all over Moscow—in the Kremlin and in Kitai gorod and Belyi gorod and Zemlianyi gorod (*i.e., neighborhoods in central Moscow*) and in the outskirts of Moscow, and in the neighborhood districts where the

musketeers live and in tax-paying districts and in the neighborhood districts where the post workers live, on streets and alleys and also in outlying towns and provinces—many people caroused with the seasonal revelries of Koliada and shrieked out their Koliada songs and chants. And during the vespers service celebrating the Epiphany of the Lord, they shrieked and danced (*klikali plugu*). And in Moscow too many scandals take place (*beschinstvo*): people sing devilish foul-mouthed songs and on Saturday evenings, before the Lord's day, and on Sundays and on holidays dedicated to God and to the Mother of God, they heat their baths and wash their clothes and many people also curse among themselves and use all sorts of unseemly cursing. And wives and girls fight using shameful words. And from the Feast of the Nativity of Christ until Epiphany, they gather in devilish gaming groups, and priests and monks and all ranks of Orthodox Christians go about Moscow drunk and they swear with scandalous foul language and fight and beat each other and cry out and howl and drink themselves unconscious. And many people follow heresies and shave their beards, and on Sundays, before the divine liturgy they sell all kinds of food in eating houses and on the streets. And on Sundays also and on holy days of the Lord, and on the feasts of the Mother of God, and Wednesdays and Fridays (*official fast days*) and during fasts, devilish strolling musicians (*igretsy*) and minstrels go around with domras and with pipes (*dudy*) and with performing bears and they denigrate the bread, the gift of God (*i.e., sacramental bread, the Host used in communion*), and they bake all kinds of animals, livestock and wild beasts and birds [into pies?].

And Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, ordered it strictly decreed that now and hereafter in Moscow and in the towns and in the provinces people should not shriek out devilish songs along the streets and alleyways or in houses or in vestibules, during Koliada at the time of vespers for the Nativity of Christ and the Epiphany, they should not swear with any sort of unseemly barking for Koliada nor engage in other unseemly rites of singing and dancing. And on Sundays and holidays and on Saturdays in the evening before Sundays, they shouldn't heat baths, and on Sunday and on the Lord's holidays, they shouldn't wash their clothes and there should be no kind of scandalous

behavior (*bezchinstvo*) which is against Christian law, and no one at all should engage in such disorderly conduct.

And by Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich's decree, State Secretary Ivan Gavrenev and Grigorii Larionov were ordered to send the sovereign's order to [certain] towns—which particular towns is known in the chancellery—and to order town criers to announce on many separate days in those towns, along streets and in marketplaces and at crossroads and in alleyways, that no one of any rank should call out songs and chants for Koliada, now or in the future. Nor should they dance or chant or sing any kind of devilish, foul-mouthed songs or fight or swear using mother curses or any kind of unseemly cursing at the time of the vespers for the Nativity of Christ or during Epiphany of the Lord. And on Saturday evenings before Sundays and on holidays, they shouldn't heat baths, and on Sundays during the day too and on the lord's holidays, they shouldn't wash their clothes or swear. And people of whatever rank should not go about drunk, and they shouldn't shave their beards or swing on swings (*these were more like suspended seesaws and were considered terribly sinful*). And during the divine liturgy they shouldn't sit around in eating houses or loiter on the streets, nor gather for holiday games and dancing. And those people who now and in the future continue to call out songs and chants for Koliada and engage in those festivities or sing foul-mouthed songs, let them be in disgrace (*opala*) and let cruel punishment be imposed upon them. And may the tsar's order be announced to all people aloud, and order town criers to shout it out on many separate days so that this, the sovereign's order, will be known to all ranks of people, and so that now and in the future no one whatsoever will engage in such scandalous behavior (*neistovstva*) and those who are guilty will be given the tsar's punishment.

3.8 *SOBORNOE ULOZHENIE*: THE CONCILIAR LAW CODE OF 1649

Source: *Muscovite Law Code (Ulozhenie) of 1649*, ed. and trans. Richard Hellie (Irvine, CA: Charles Schlacks Jr., 1988), 4, 220, 223. Brackets in the original.

As already noted, we tend to apply the neat and definitive term "law" to the messy field of decrees and regulations that piled one on top of another in a chaotic, undigested fashion. Tsars issued decrees on an ad hoc basis in response to the pressing issues of the day and without undue concern for precedent, contradiction, or consistent application. A new order might repeat, extend, or undercut previous ones, and in all likelihood no one would notice. Decrees such as Ivan IV's regulation of witchcraft and unruly conduct or Aleksei Mikhailovich's 1648 decree on the same topic were sent to particular regions, identified in the orders themselves, and may or may not have been intended to regulate the entire tsardom.

The compiled law codes were different. From time to time, the rulers or their administrators felt the need to compile a consistent, coherent set of laws and to extend the regulations to areas and problems left unexamined in previous legal statutes. The *Russkaia Pravda* served this function in medieval times, although we have no indication that it was ever put into use. Muscovy produced three major legal compilations—the *Sudebniks* of 1497 and 1550, and the massive Conciliar Law Code, the *Sobornoe ulozhenie* of 1649—as well as two others with more limited application—the *Sudebniks* of 1589 and 1606.

Where the early codes devoted most of their attention to regulating the conduct of state officials and holding them to high standards of honesty and procedural regularity, the 1649 *Ulozhenie* cast a wide net, legislating everything from property holding and inheritance to the leashing of dogs in urban residences. It is particularly noted for its role in enserfing the peasantry. By its regulations, peasants were to be bound permanently to the estates on which they were registered, without any statute of limitations on their landlords' right to reclaim them if they ran away. Ambitious in its scope and impressive in its length, the *Ulozhenie* contains 25 chapters divided into 968 articles. None of those articles addresses witchcraft directly. Its opening chapter, however, is dedicated to upholding the honor of the Church, of the Orthodox faith, and of the pious tsar who embodies them both. Witchcraft and magic did not receive explicit mention in these articles, but their threat is implied, both by allusion to anyone who "conceived a malevolent deed against his tsarist majesty," and by the discussion of poison, always closely associated with magic potions and bewitchment.

Chapter 1, Article 1: "Concerning blasphemers and heretics"

If someone of another faith, of any faith at all, or a Russian person, should blaspheme the Lord God and Our Savior Jesus Christ or the Mother Who gave birth to him, the Immaculate Mother of God and Immaculate Virgin Mary, or the holy cross or his saints and martyrs, and if these matters are

investigated with all due diligence and it is truthfully established, then this blasphemer having been identified should be executed by burning.

Chapter 2: The sovereign's honor, and how to safeguard his royal well-being, article 1

If someone by any intent proceeds to think up a malevolent deed against the sovereign's well-being, and someone denounces his malevolent intent, and after that denunciation that malevolent intent of his is established conclusively, that he conceived a malevolent deed against his tsarist majesty, and he intended to carry it out: after investigation, punish such a person with death.

Chapter 22, article 8

If someone contemplates killing that person whom he serves; or, desiring to kill him, draws a weapon against him: cut off his hand for such an action.

Article 23

If someone poisons someone with poison, and that person who was poisoned dies from that poison: torture rigorously that person who commits such an evil deed [to learn] whether he previously had committed such a deed against anyone else. Having tortured him, punish him with death.

3.9 ALEKSEI MIKHAILOVICH'S DECREE PROHIBITING WITCHCRAFT AND ACTIVITIES REPELLENT TO GOD (1653)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, stolbtsy razriadnykh stolov, Sevskago stola, stlb. 148, ll. 92–94; Almost identical texts in Belgorodskii stol, stlb. 362, ll. 165, 244–47; Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 194, ll. 97–98, 101–3; stlb. 203, ll. 25–27, 28–31, 133–36, 224–27, 237–40, 390–95, 396, 397, 403, 404–5, 406–7, 461–

76. Several are reproduced in N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Vrachebnoe stroenie v do-Petrovskoi Rusi* (Tomsk: Tipo-litografiia Sibirsk. T-va pechatn. dela, 1907), no. 46, lxxxiv–lxxxvi; and in Tat'iana A. Oparina, "Neizvestnyi ukaz 1653 g. o zapreshchenii koldovstva," *Drevniaia Rus': Voprosy medievistiki* 3, no. 9 (2002): 88–91.

Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich took the dangers of witchcraft and sorcery seriously, not only where they threatened those near and dear to him, such as the beautiful young woman he had picked out as his first betrothed (see Document 2.11) but also in the tsardom at large. Of concern were not only the practical tolls of magic at work in the realm, such as magically induced sickness and death but also the spiritual costs of allowing the population to engage in activities "repellent to God."

Although this instruction was not incorporated into the codified law code, the tsar took steps to guarantee its energetic dissemination. The Russian State Archive of Ancient Documents in Moscow preserves multiple copies of the order directed to officials in many provincial centers, or responses from those officials reporting the results of the new policies. Scholars have identified instructions in this series sent to eighteen Russian provinces. Another document records that similar orders were sent to officials in forty-six Ukrainian and Russian towns.

The document presented here records the response from a local official in Lukh, a town about 350 miles northeast of Moscow. It reveals the typical Muscovite bureaucratic habit of repeating, word for word, each exchange with the center. It recapitulates the tsar's original instruction, repeats each step in order to affirm receipt of the instruction, and repeats it again in order to signal compliance with the instruction. These documents often grew extremely long with their tedious repetitions. This one includes a nice surprise ending, where the Lukh official reports that he has found no witchcraft afoot in his province.

To Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, your slave, Izotko Miakinin, petitions.

In this year 1653 on the thirteenth day of May, your sovereign instruction was sent to me in Lukh from the Military Chancellery under the signature of your state secretary Ivan Severov to me, your slave. By your sovereign instruction I was ordered to announce to all ranks of service people in Lukh and in Lukh Province and residents at the local governor's office on more than one day, and on market days to order town criers to cry out the sovereign's instruction, not just on one occasion but on multiple days.

They should announce that in Lukh and in Lukh Province many ranks of ignorant people, forgetting the fear of God and not bearing in mind the hour of their death and not thinking of the eternal torment, keep forbidden

(*otrechennye*) and heretical and fortune-telling books and writings and spells and roots and grasses, and they go to male witches (*kolduny*) and to fortune-tellers (*vorozheĭ*) and tell fortunes with fortune-telling books and bones. And they bewitch many people to death with those roots and grasses and heretical spells, and from their bewitchment (*porcha*) many people suffer from various illnesses and are bewitched and die.

And by your sovereign order, I was ordered in Lukh and Lukh Province to announce to all ranks of people that from today forth by your sovereign order they should desist from all such evil activities, repellent to God (*zlye, bogomerzskie*). And whoever has such forbidden and heretical writings and grasses and roots should burn those forbidden and heretical writings and grasses and roots, and this year during the Great Fast (*Lent*), they should come to their spiritual fathers without any hesitation (*sumneniia*), and henceforth they should not participate in any such matters repellent to God and should not go to male witches or fortune-tellers and should not participate in any witchcraft (*vedovstvo*) and should not tell fortunes with bones or anything else, and should not bewitch people. And by your sovereign instruction I was ordered in Lukh and Lukh Province to announce to all ranks of people that those people who henceforth do not desist from their evil and from activities repellent to God and do not burn their forbidden and heretical books and writings and roots and poisons (*otravy*) and after today's order from the sovereign continue to keep forbidden and heretical books and writings and roots and poisons in their homes and continue to go to witches and fortune-tellers or conduct any kind of witchcraft and tell fortunes with bones or with anything else or who bewitch people, by your sovereign order such evil people and enemies of God are ordered to be burned alive in a wooden cage without any mercy. And destroy their houses down to the foundations so that in the future such evil people and enemies of God and their evil deeds will not be remembered by anyone anywhere.

And after I receive your order in Lukh and Lukh Province and I announce all of this, I am ordered to report it to you in writing to the

Military Chancellery in Moscow and following your sovereign instructions, I, your slave, carried this out.

And Sovereign, after I, your slave, carried out your sovereign order and had this decree read out in Lukh and Lukh Province to all ranks of people, no one reported anyone engaging in such evil activities repellent to God.

3.10 "NEWLY ESTABLISHED ARTICLES ON ROBBERY, BRIGANDAGE, AND MURDER AND RELATED DECREE" (1669)

Source: *PSZ*, vol. 1, no. 431, arts. 99–101, 119.

In 1669, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich's government issued a lengthy set of new laws to supplement the *Ulozhenie*. Called the "Newly Established Articles on Robbery, Brigandage, and Murder," the new code followed Byzantine precedent in categorizing bewitchment as a form of maiming or murder. Here the recommended form of execution for witches remains unstated, but the subsequent articles, concerning female murderers, prescribe a horrific form of execution: female murderers were to be buried alive up to their chests and left to die a slow, painful death. This form of execution had been meted out to female felons since at least the early decades of the seventeenth century, and had been included in codified law since the 1649 Conciliar Law Code. The 1669 code reaffirmed its currency. A 1689 decree technically abolished its use, but Nancy Shields Kollmann documents its continued use into the eighteenth century.[50] In Document 3.11, a selection from an account by Grigorii Kotoshikhin, a Russian defector to Sweden, we find confirmation that the cruel punishment, specially prescribed for women in the "Newly Established Articles," was indeed put into practice.

The 1669 code takes a strong position on the right of ecclesiastical courts to adjudicate cases involving clerics, although without specifically mentioning witchcraft trials. A decree issued earlier in the same year specifies that this division of labor was indeed meant to apply in witchcraft cases. Trial records, however, demonstrate that this particular rule was not uniformly observed: despite the clarity of the law, several cases from the 1680s and 1690s showcase churchmen who lost their bids to be tried in church courts when accused of sorcery.[51]

"Newly established articles"

Article 99. If a person poisons someone with a potion, and the person whom they have poisoned dies from that potion, the person who carried out such an evil act should be tortured harshly to see if he did this same kind of thing to anyone else previously, and from whom he learned this evil. And having tortured him, execute him. And in the civil law (*gradskie zakony*) it is written: if someone works sorcery (*charodeianiia*) toward the destruction of a person, or if he keeps it for himself or sells [magical services], then let him be tortured according to the law like a murderer.

Article 100. And if a woman kills her husband or feeds him poison, and this is fully and truthfully investigated, she should be executed for this. She is to be buried alive in the earth, and she is to be executed in this way without any mercy, even if the murdered man left children or other close relatives, even so, give no mercy. And leave her in the earth until she dies.

Article 101. And if a woman is sentenced to death, and at that time she is pregnant, do not execute that woman until she gives birth, but execute her at that time when she has given birth, and until that time keep her in prison or under strong guard so that she does not escape.

Article 119. For clerical people and people of ecclesiastical ranks, do not take testimony from them because clerical people are supposed to be questioned by clerical courts, and state investigators (*syshchiki*) are not allowed in clerical courts.

Decree of January 1669

Source: *PSZ*, vol. 1, no. 442.

If ecclesiastical people are accused of theft from church or from secular people, or of forging money or banditry or murder or witchcraft (*vedovsto*), and are caught and brought to town to the investigator (*syshchik*), they should be turned over to ecclesiastical courts.

3.11 GRIGORII KOTOSHIKHIN ON MUSCOVITE JUDICIAL PROCESS,

TORTURE, AND EXECUTION (1660S)

Source: Grigorii Karpovich Kotoshikhin, *Russia in the Reign of Aleksei Mikhailovich*, trans. Benjamin Phillip Uroff, ed. Marshall Poe (Walter de Gruyter GmbH & Co KG, 2014), 130–34. https://doi/org/10.2478/9788376560656.3. Brackets in the original.
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Grigorii Karpovich Kotoshikhin (c. 1630–1667), also discussed in Document 2.11, was a relatively low-level Kremlin insider, a clerk in the Ambassadorial Chancellery. In 1664, he defected to Sweden, where he wrote a description of Muscovy for the Swedish king. In this passage he describes a brutal system of legal interrogation, punishment, and execution implemented by the Brigandage Chancellery, a branch of government responsible for policing criminal offenses, including here, witchcraft and sorcery.

The Brigandage Chancellery

And it is headed by a boyar or *okol'nichii*, and attendant of the royal table [*stol'nik*] or nobleman [*dvorianin*], and two secretaries. And that chancellery has jurisdiction over all cases of brigandage and theft and all arraignment and executioners throughout the Muscovite state; and there are about fifty of these executioners in Moscow and they are given a yearly salary. Likewise in the provinces police district [*guba*] chancelleries have been established for cases of brigandage and theft, and those matters are under the jurisdiction of elected noblemen [*dvoriane*] who have sworn an oath and kissed the cross—men who are too old to serve with their [provincial] regiments. And prisons have been established for criminals of every kind; and in Moscow there are guards for those prisons and for the chancellery—men chosen from among the inhabitants of the Moscow districts [*slobody*]; and in the provinces the undersecretaries and guards and bailiff are chosen from among the urban and rural inhabitants, whoever their masters may be, who have sworn an oath and kissed the cross and have provided surety; and men of various ranks are taken on a voluntary basis to serve as executioners in Moscow and in the provinces. And whatever rank of man, be he prince or boyar or ordinary man, is caught in brigandage or theft or [any other] evil act—murder or arson or some other crime—he is

brought to Moscow to the Brigandage or Land Chancellery, and in the provinces to the local government offices or the police district [*guba*] chancellery; and if men have been engaged in brigandage and have committed murder or arson and theft, and their accomplices have scattered and escaped, such evildoers are interrogated and tortured without mercy, on holidays just as on any other day, on the grounds that they are criminals and themselves committed their crimes and murders without caring what day it was, and likewise so as to search out their accomplices through their testimony. Likewise other evildoers are similarly tortured once or twice or three times, depending upon the circumstances, and following the torture, the appropriate orders are issued. And when a man denounces others and indicates their hiding places, those men, upon being apprehended, are all brought for a face-to-face confrontation; and then that criminal is severely tortured to learn if they are truly the men whom he had denounced and who had assisted or concealed or protected him in that crime, or if they have been falsely denounced out of hatred; and if upon torture he testifies that they truly assisted or concealed or protected him, then they are all likewise subjected to torture. And the tortures employed for various criminals are [such]: the criminal's shirt is removed and his hands are tied behind his back, by the wrists, with a rope, and that rope is covered with felt, and he is lifted up to a place constructed like a gallows, and his feet are tied with a strap; and a single executioner places his foot on the strap between his feet and pulls him down, so that the criminal's arms are pulled straight above his head and are pulled out from their sockets; and then the executioner begins to beat him on the back with the knout, slowly, thirty or forty blows an hour; wherever he hits him on the back, that spot looks literally as if a large strip has been cut out with a knife, almost to the bone. And [the handle of] that knout is made of thick plaited straps, with a thick strap, one finger wide and about five elbows long, attached to the end. And if they do not confess after the initial torture they are tortured a second and a third time, at intervals of a week, and are burned with fire: their hands and feet are tied and beams are placed between their arms and between their legs, and they are raised up over a fire; while others have their ribs broken with red-hot pincers. And if they still do not confess after these tortures, they are put in prison until they can obtain surety that they will henceforth not engage in evil acts and will henceforth not plot any evil against anyone;

and if they obtain surety they are released. But if they have been in prison for two years or more, and have not obtained surety, they are released from prison and sent into lifetime exile to distant regions, to Siberia or Astrakhan; and those who confess are likewise put in prison and appropriate instructions are issued, depending on the crime. And as for those criminals who engage in brigandage, and have even been caught twice but have not been guilty of murder or arson: such men, for the first offense, are publicly beaten with the knout, their left ear is cut off, and they are sent into exile; while for the second offense, if they are caught in the same act, they are beaten with the knout, their right ear is cut off, and they are again sent into exile; and for other offenses other punishments and penalties are imposed, upon consideration of what each man deserves. And for less serious and minor offenses the punishment is to be beaten with the knout and with switches, depending upon the offense, after which he is released. And various forms of the death penalty are imposed upon males: they are beheaded with the axe for murder and other evil acts; they are hanged, likewise for murder and other evil acts; they are quartered alive and then beheaded, for treason—surrendering a fortress to the enemy or entering into friendly relations with the enemy through correspondence, or whatever other evil treasonous and repugnant acts may be discovered; they are burned alive for blasphemy, for church robbery, for sodomy, for sorcery, for black magic, for falsifying [church] books by new, evil, and blasphemous interpretations of the Apostles and Prophets and Holy Fathers; they have lead and tin poured down their throats for engaging in counterfeiting—silver and gold coiners who criminally add copper and lead and tin to the gold and silver, while others for lesser crimes of this kind have their hands and feet cut off, or their fingers and toes; their hands and feet or fingers and toes are cut off for rebellious conspiracy or causing turmoil, if their guilt in the matter is less serious, while others are put to death; likewise if someone in the tsar's palace or elsewhere should raise a sword or knife against another, whether he injures him or not, and likewise for minor offenses against the church, and if someone threatens to strike his mother and father but does not do so, the punishments are similar; for an offense against the tsar's dignity, if someone should speak shameful or other abusive words about him when not in his presence, he shall be beaten with the knout and his tongue shall be cut out. Females are tortured in the same way as males,

except for being burned over a fire and having their ribs broken. And females are put to death as follows: for blasphemy and church robbery and for sodomy they are burned alive; for witchcraft and murder they are beheaded; for murdering children and for other similar evil acts they are buried alive in the ground breast-high, including their arms, and the ground is trampled down, and they die from this on the same day or the second or third day; and for dishonoring the tsar the punishment is the same as for men. And those men who commit crimes with married or unmarried women and are caught, on that same day or a subsequent day both of them, man and woman, whoever they might be, are led naked through the market-square and through the streets and are beaten with the knout.

3.12 PETER I'S 1715 DECREE AGAINST SHRIEKERS (THE DEMONICALLY POSSESSED)

Source: *PSZ*, vol. 5, no. 2906; quoted and translated by Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 28–29. A slightly corrected version appears here. Brackets in the original.

Significantly, Peter the Great's first decree against witchcraft (May 7, 1715) neither mentions witchcraft nor targets witches or sorcerers. Rather, it directs its attention to a discrete group of alleged victims of witchcraft–shriekers (*klikushi*), mainly women who believed that witches or sorcerers had implanted demons inside their bodies. These demons proceeded to recoil and protest in the presence of holy objects and during religious services. When the demons acted up, shriekers cried out in various animal voices, tore at their hair and clothing, writhed on the floor, and generally lost consciousness for a time. They also sometimes shrieked out the names of the individual witches or sorcerers they thought had bewitched them. As we shall see, the phenomenon of demonic possession (*klikushestvo*) appeared occasionally during seventeenth-century witch trials and its victims were predominantly women, as in Western Europe and Salem, although miracle tales that recounted the wondrous works of Russian Orthodox saints from the early modern period identified a majority of male victims among the demonically possessed. In the miracle tales, however, demonic possession was not

usually associated with witchcraft; the world was simply full of unclean spirits who taunted humans.

In the decree below, Peter demands that all individuals, whether men or women, who claimed to be shriekers be seized and questioned by government officials. It is striking that he used the feminine word *klikusha* to identify the men instead of the masculine word *besnovatyi* or *derzhimyi* and in so doing deprived them of their masculinity. The notion that the loss of control over body or mind constituted a specific feminine attribute was quite new in Peter's time. It was presumably imported from European cultures in which possession was more commonly associated with women. With the change in nomenclature, Peter signaled that men should not identify themselves as demoniacs. He was also concerned that some of the shriekers were shamming their possession and were intentionally using their condition as a means of falsely accusing others of committing the serious criminal act of witchcraft.

Peter was not the first ruler to identify fraudulent possession cases. James I of England had done so in the early seventeenth century. The notion of fraudulence was also becoming more widespread in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries with regard to beggars and vagrants, as their growing numbers (as a result of the beginnings of a demographic revolution) prompted Enlightened rulers, including Peter, to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor and to legislate harsh measures against beggars and vagrants. In the case of imperial Russia, fraudulent shriekers were sometimes identified among these so-called parasites who did not contribute their labors to the state and who disturbed the order of a society in which serfdom was entrenched. Interestingly, during his visit to Moscow in the 1720s, the Englishman Thomas Consett identified shriekers as "Persons that feign themselves bewitch'd, screaming and shrieking with the utmost Distraction, to move the Compassion of Spectators to give them Money; two or three of these Vagabonds were severely whip'd."[52]

Figure 4: Miracle of the healing of the youth Viktor from demonic possession by St. Mitrofan of Voronezh from the Icon: St Metrophanes of Voronezh with Scenes from His Life, detail, nineteenth century. This exorcism scene is one of sixteen scenes from the life of the saint that surround a central image of the saint in episcopal garb. Tempera on wood, 28 x 35 x 2.3 cm, Hermitage Museum, no. IeRZh-2913, kleimo no. 11. Courtesy of The State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Photograph © The State Hermitage Museum/photo by Vladimir Terebenin.

In addition to questioning all instances of demonic possession, Peter and his adviser Bishop Prokopovich raised rationalist skepticism about certain religious practices that could result in fraudulent local claims about the existence of supposedly miracle-working icons and miracle-working relics that had not been subjected to rigorous centralized investigation and inquiry. It is not surprising then that in January 1716, Peter issued another decree requiring bishops to take an oath at their consecration to take care that people did not venerate unverified intact corpses as saints (given the fact that Russian Orthodox saints' bodies were often whole and perceived to be uncorrupted), "that false

and invented miracles are not attributed to holy icons, that a close watch be kept for shriekers, etc." Bishops were to visit their parishes regularly to ensure that believers did not engage in such superstitious practices "wherefore cause is given to enemies for casting aspersions upon Orthodox believers" and to turn fraudulent shriekers over to civil authorities.[53] A schism had taken place in the Russian Orthodox Church as a result of liturgical reform and changes to prescribed rituals in the middle of the seventeenth century. Opponents of these alterations in received texts and practices gradually coalesced into a movement whose adherents called themselves Old Believers. Although Peter fined Old Believers, who viewed him as the personification of the Antichrist, he could not stem their influence or stop the development of sectarian movements. The further rationalization of Orthodox beliefs was in part an attempt to blunt the criticisms of Old Believers and sectarians.

Despite Peter's skepticism about individual cases of witchcraft, he did not question the real and terrifying possibility of both witchcraft and demonic possession. Soldiers who were suffering from the ailment and were unfit for labor were dispatched to monasteries for care. A couple of months after Peter's death in February 1725, it took a Senate ruling to stipulate that a medical doctor was best equipped to decide if the possession was real or not, and "only those who appear to be incurable and possessed by evil spirits" were deemed legitimate and deserving of such care.[54]

Peter also employed a didactic technique in the initial decree against shriekers that he would use in other laws: he explained his new law by giving a concrete case of fraudulent possession, involving Varvara Loginova, who under interrogation by his Secret Chancellery had admitted to feigning her shrieking in order to take vengeance on a carpenter named Grigorii. By doing so, the tsar was able to explain his abhorrence of fraudulent shriekers and hopefully deter others from similar behavior.

Curiously, Peter neglected to tell his people the nature of Loginova's punishment or the penalties the civil authorities were to mete out to fraudulent shriekers more generally. Only in the spring of 1722, did he stipulate the horrific maximum penalty of "eternal banishment to the galleys with his nostrils slit" for any person who "for his own interest, or for the sake of vain-glory, orders a priest deceitfully and slyly to publicize some miracle by means of shriekers, or in some other way creates superstition."[55] In practice, fraudulent female shriekers were whipped and sometimes sent away to labor in factories. Given the cultural and legal feminization of demonic possession, men in the eighteenth century rarely identified themselves or were identified as demoniacs.

A [decree] signed by the tsar, announced by the Senate: Regarding the arrest and interrogation of shriekers

The Great Sovereign ordered that wherever any shriekers of the male and female sex appear, they are to be apprehended and taken to the [appropriate] department for interrogation, on the basis of the fact that on the 7th and 8th of last November 1714, in the Cathedral of St. Isaac of

Dalmatia in St. Petersburg, during the holy liturgy, the carpenter's wife Varvara Loginova screamed as if she had been bewitched, and she was questioned, and under interrogation said that she had not been bewitched but rather had falsely screamed that she had been bewitched, for the sole reason that today was close to a year since the carpenter Grigorii had come to blows with her brother-in-law Stafei Lunianov, when she and her husband Elisei and her brother-in-law were visiting the carpenter Mikhail Makoveev, both in his home and on the street. After she (*pulled them apart*), they went to their separate homes. And after that Varvara began to think how she might take revenge on the carpenter Grigorii for beating her brother-in-law and resolved to scream as if she were bewitched and denounce Grigorii as having bewitched her, so as to ruin him. And a week after the above-mentioned brawl she began to shriek at home twice and three times a week, and, as if demented, shrieked that Grigorii had bewitched her. And on the above-mentioned 7th and 8th of November, being in the Cathedral of St. Isaac of Dalmatia, during the liturgy, she also deliberately shrieked as though she were bewitched and said that Grigorii had bewitched her. And she did this solely to take revenge on Grigorii on behalf of her brother-in-law and to ruin him; but no one had bewitched her, Varvara. She shrieked fraudulently, and herein lies her guilt.

3.13 PETER I'S 1716 MILITARY STATUTE AND SUGGESTED REVISIONS TO ITS RELIGIOUS ARTICLES (1725)

Source: *PSZ*, vol. 5, no. 3006.

The articles relating to magic and sorcery in Peter the Great's 1716 Military Statute were attached to the new loyalty oath to the tsar and have appeared already in Document 2.10. We repeat the short articles here because they were significant laws that affected the prosecution of witchcraft in the eighteenth century and the 1725 proposed amendments to these articles, which appear below them, can be more easily compared with the originals. For more information about Peter's 1716 decree, see the introduction to 2.10 (Loyalty Oaths).

The Military Statute

Chapter 1: The fear of God

Article 1. Even though everyone in general and every Christian without exception is required to live in a Christian manner and honorably and not to feign the fear of God, these soldiers and military people have to respect and to heed it with greater zeal, because God appointed them to a station in life, in which they frequently find that there is not one hour where they are not exposed to the greatest danger to their lives while in the sovereign's service. Because every blessing, victory, and well-being proceeds from the one and only all-powerful God, as the true source of all good and righteous victory, it is necessary to pray only to Him and to put faith in Him, and in particular to observe this in all matters and undertakings, and always to uphold good. For the sake of this, all idol worshipping, magic—that is, black arts—are strictly forbidden, and thus none of them will ever be permitted and tolerated in a military camp or anywhere else. If any soldier is found to be an idol worshipper, black magician, gun charmer, or superstitious and blasphemous sorcerer, depending on the nature of the offense he shall be placed under close arrest, put in irons, made to run the gauntlet, or be burned to death.

Interpretation: Death by burning is to be the normal punishment for black magicians if they have harmed anyone by magic or have actually bound themselves to the devil. If he has not harmed anyone or not had any dealings with Satan, then he should be punished by one of the other punishments listed above, and made to do public church penance.

Article 2: Anyone who buys the services of a sorcerer or persuades him to commit evil against someone else, that person will be punished in the same manner as the sorcerer.

Interpretation: When someone commits something through a second person, he is considered to have committed it himself.

Suggested revisions to the religious articles of the 1716 Military Statute (1725)

Source: RGIA, f. 796 (Synodal), op. 6, no. 358, 15 ll. (1725); also published in *Opisanie dokumentov i del khraniashchikhsia v arkhive Sviateishago Pravitel'stvuiushchago Sinoda*, vol. 5: (*1725 g.*) (St. Petersburg: V Sinodal'noi tipografii, 1807), 569–79.

Report of November 10, 1725 [from the Military College to the Holy Synod for consideration and approval of several articles in the Military Statute regarding ecclesiastical verdicts], signed by Prince Iurii Trubetskoi and Prince Vasilii Dolgorukii

The following report of November 10, 1725 (several months after the death of Peter I), signed by two leading statesmen, Princes Iurii Trubetskoi and Vasilii Dolgorukii,[56] documents a belated effort to shore up and clarify the innovations introduced in Peter's Military Statute. The section containing a total of twenty-eight carefully reworked sanctions involving religious matters, including eight more precise definitions of sorcery with repeated references to appropriate church penances, has survived in part in the Holy Synod archives and fully in the published version of the documents. The efforts failed, due to opposition from the Church or, more precisely, from the Holy Synod, a branch of government entrusted with oversight of church matters and religious affairs. A draft was sent from the Military College to the Synod for its "mature and wise consideration" specifically of the prescribed penalties, to see if they "correspond with and are in accord with spiritual rules." 'The Holy Synod, having examined the articles and having noted in them "many difficulties (*neudobnosti*),' " which it listed, provided reasons for its objections.[57] Unfortunately, the full record of the discussions does not seem to have survived, but the ultimate ruling was apparently negative, as the proposal went no farther.

Despite the fact that it never made its way into law, the proposal and the exchange around it are remarkably interesting in a number of ways. First, and most directly relevant to our theme, they testify to an urge to define more precisely what exactly constituted witchcraft. The articles spell out various forms and kinds of magic in far more detail than we have seen before. It is also noteworthy that in the effort to describe magical practice, the authors drew on the demonological understandings that had previously been absent, or at least understated, in Russian texts and practices. The pact with the devil emerges here in sharp outline, even more than in the original Military Statute. Evidently the drafters of this abortive proposal drew on earlier Swedish models in shaping their ideas. Again, even though the proposal did not pass into law, it demonstrates that Western tropes about satanic witchcraft were making rapid inroads among educated elites. Since it was the elite, as judges and officials, who had the power to pose questions and torture suspects until they provided the proper answers, their concepts of witchcraft would partially reshape popular ideas in the following decades.

The second intriguing aspect of this proposal is that it sheds light on the much-debated matter of the relationship between church and state. Though not directly addressing this

fraught relationship, the document indirectly illuminates what was at stake and how the division of powers was worked out. Peter, working with his close adviser Feofan Prokopovich, famously abolished (or, more precisely, allowed to fall into abeyance) the Russian patriarchate and replaced it with the Holy Synod. Peter also dragooned members of the clergy into service to the state in a variety of ways. The 1721 Spiritual Regulation (see Document 3.14) attempted to transform them into the eyes, ears, and mouthpieces of the state. It mandated that priests read imperial decrees from the pulpit, thus both publicizing and legitimizing state actions. More radically, the Spiritual Regulation required priests to break the seal of confession if they heard anything treasonous.

These policies have led historians to view Peter as a secularizing ruler, bent on subordinating the church to the state. More recent work has begun to question whether Peter truly aimed to secularize or rather simply to streamline and rationalize. Scholars have also challenged the notion that the Orthodox Church became the docile "handmaiden of the state." The ability of the Holy Synod to squash this proposal may lend support to those who argue for a continuing role of the Church as active partner in and beyond the Petrine era.[58]

In light of this debate, we want to spend a bit of time considering a final, less familiar piece of this Petrine intrusion into ecclesiastical territory: the attempt to use religious penance as an extension of secular punishment for certain crimes. Already in the seventeenth century, church penances were occasionally recorded in witchcraft cases. It is possible that they were common but simply did not merit mention in the judicial reports, because the granting and determination of penance belonged to the ecclesiastical sphere, not the civil one. In any event, it seems one goal of the proposed reform may have been to make religious penances universal for spiritual crimes. Another, apparently, was to allow secular authorities, rather than churchmen, to set punitive penances for crimes against church and state, including witchcraft and sedition. And finally, the proposal built on Peter's earlier statutes, which had begun to transform the way that penance was performed and, along with that, the theological significance it conveyed. This may explain why the ecclesiastical hierarchy buried the recommendations. We dwell on this issue a bit here because it is an aspect of Peter's church reforms that has received little scholarly attention.

Traditional religious practices kept a confession secret between priest and penitent and gave a cleric flexibility to set a penance that did not solely rest on the magnitude of a crime, but also took into account a person's contrition before God and the suffering the individual might have already experienced under torture and imprisonment. A cleric even had the right to dispense with the religious penance altogether if he thought the civil penalty was sufficiently harsh. He also enjoyed the prerogative of assigning a severe penance if circumstances warranted it. Once a cleric determined the penance, the criminal had to stand on the porch just outside the main church doors (see Document 4.9) and beg worshippers who were allowed to enter the sanctuary to say prayers on his or her behalf. Community members would not, however, know the exact nature of the penance.

Peter's innovation was to introduce a new type of confession that constituted a civic duty; it had a precise script that allowed the state to intrude in the consecrated area of

the church. The new public confession for crimes against church and state was to proceed as follows. Priests were to inform their congregations of such an event in advance to ensure a large audience. On the designated day, usually a Sunday, just after the early morning services and before the start of the great liturgy, civil guards were to bring the criminal into the church. The church's deacon was to emerge from behind the iconostasis and read out loud the secular court's decision, pointing directly to the guarded penitent when his or her name was mentioned. Then the clergyman was to address the faithful: "And now he (the guilty party), in confessing his sin will be brought to repentance as he asks of the all-merciful God forgiveness. May all Orthodox people, after having heard his confession, guard themselves from these and other similar actions. And on his behalf, let us pray in contrition, that he should beg forgiveness from the Lord God. Let us pray."

On hearing these words, the penitent was to make three full body prostrations facing the altar, turn around, and make his confession facing the religious community rather than the iconostasis and altar and therefore God. This startling change of orientation undermined the entire point of Christian confession, substituting apologizing to the community for communion with God. "I, the lowest and most sinful slave before the Lord God and before you, Orthodox Christians, for my sin that has been announced, with grieving heart and with guilt for that sin, I beg forgiveness before everyone and I pray, in the name of your human compassion, pray for me, sinner that I am, so that I may renounce my sin against the Lord God in this life and in the hereafter. Amen." The civil guards would then escort the penitent to the site of his physical punishment.[59]

The repeated references to a criminal's repentance before civil authorities in the proposed amendments to Peter's religious articles suggest that its secular authors were not merely endorsing Peter's notion of a civil religious penance but enlarging its civic component. A strong faction in the Holy Synod viewed the Petrine religious reformation, including the introduction of a new penance, to have infringed on church prerogatives. In the next several years they would try (unsuccessfully) to restore the patriarchate and ask for more jurisdiction over witchcraft. This latter effort met with some success. A 1728 synodal decree asserted that priests could mete out penance for witchcraft offenses and bypass secular courts if the infractions were mild enough. But more victories went to the state.[60] Under Empress Anna, efforts to undo most of the Petrine religious reforms were squashed. Nevertheless, the civic penance met with enough opposition within clerical ranks that it was not fully implemented until the reign of Catherine the Great several decades later and then only with regard to murder.[61] Over the course of the eighteenth century, ecclesiastical officials continually reminded civil authorities that the church had the prerogative to assign religious penances in cases of witchcraft.

Chapter 1, article 1: Of the general fear of God

Although all Christians in general and each Christian in particular holds on to Christianity with no reservations, and they hold themselves to live honorably and in genuine fear of God, nonetheless, soldiers and military

people need to do so with greater zeal than others because God assigned them this condition in which there is not one hour where they are not exposed to the greatest danger to their lives while in the sovereign's service. And since every blessing, victory, and good fortune from the One God Almighty, the true source from which all good fortune and righteous victory flows, and to him alone we pray and on him we place our hopes, and all the more so in all affairs and undertakings, and always to uphold the good. So for this reason, all idolatry, sorcery, that is, black-book magic, and spells are utterly prohibited, and thus, none of these will be allowed or tolerated, not in a military camp or anywhere at all. And if someone of military rank is found to be an idolater, black-book magician, an enchanter of weapons, a superstitious or blasphemous sorcerer, on conclusion of the case they are to be placed under harsh imprisonment in chains, forced to run the gauntlet, or be beaten with birch rods while tied up to a post, or burned to death (*The published version provides an alternate formulation: the guilty party "should be sentenced to death"*).

Article 2: A person who harms someone using sorcery without binding himself to the devil

If someone wanted to bind himself to the devil but did not carry it out, but even so, through forbidden means and diabolical tricks that run contrary to God's word and to His command and to the Holy Trinity, inflicts harm, for carrying out such malevolence that person should be beheaded with a sword.

Article 3: Regarding the illicit use of magical figurines, ribbons, and other such means

If someone attempts to use forbidden means—such as figurines, knots or seals, or oral incantations, through which the honor and name of God are profaned, and through which either they want to treat an illness or foresee the future—or find stolen items or anything similar, [if no harm was caused] he should be assigned a fine according to the judgment of the court, based on the nature of the case and the individual involved: he should either be locked up on bread and water for some time, or assigned public church penance with additional punishment as appropriate.

Article 4: Someone who, on concluding a pact with the devil, repents and returns to the Church

If it happens that someone repents after previously concluding a pact with the Devil, then he should be called before a court for his crime and sorcery. If he comes voluntarily and in a heartfelt manner begs God for forgiveness for his great sin, and if he regrets it, and if he did not harm anyone, then he is to be freed from the usual penalty of burning but must nevertheless be punished with public church penance.

Article 5: If, during the period of obligation to the devil, someone inflicts harm on a lineage (familiia)

If, during the time when a pact with the devil is in effect, a person harms someone by those means, and if that harm is so grave as to be deadly, or if he keeps his kin and servants in thrall through enchantment, but he voluntarily comes forward and repents, then he might be freed from the death penalty in exchange for his repentance, but only as the court determines according to the circumstances of the case and the gravity of the harm. If the crime is committed by a servant of an officer, and if his master does not want to pay the fine for him, then give him as a servant to the person he wished to harm, and he (*the aggrieved party*) should be paid one *poltina* (*a silver coin*) per month, but if the aggrieved party is not satisfied with this arrangement, then he is free to send him to hard labor for a period defined by the degree of guilt.

Article 6: If, [during the period of obligation to the devil], someone inflicts harm on livestock or other property, but not on a lineage (familiia)

If, during the time when a pact with the devil is in effect, the harm that person inflicts not on a lineage but on livestock or some other property belonging to another person is not so grave as to be deadly, and afterward he comes forward and admits to it, he is freed from the death penalty, but only as the court determines according to the circumstances of the case and the gravity of the crime. If the crime is committed by a servant of an officer,

and if his master does not want to pay the fine for him, (*the penalty is the same as stipulated in article 5*).

Article 7: If someone seeks a sorcerer or a person familiar with the black arts (chernoknizhnik) and seeks advice from him

If someone dares to seek a sorcerer or diviner and seeks advice from him, then if no harm has been committed against anyone and this is the first such offense, he will be fined; if he is an officer, he will lose a month's salary, which [in turn] will be sent to a hospital; if he is a rank-and-file soldier, he will have to carry a rifle three hours a day for three days. In the event of a second offense, if no harm is done, the officer will pay double the amount of the first fine and the rank-and-file soldier will have his sentence doubled. In the event of a third offense the officer will have his rank lowered for a month, while the rank-and-file soldier will be beaten with a switch before his entire regiment. In all cases a church penance will be levied.

Article 8: If someone hires a sorcerer or harms horses or livestock, or if someone, knowing of a sorcerer, does not inform on him

If someone hires or is inclined to hire a sorcerer to inflict harm on someone, he is to be punished in the same manner as the sorcerer, but if the said harm is not inflicted on an individual or lineage but rather on livestock, horses, and other property of his close kin, and he is denounced for this, he will be fined according to the gravity of the harm and the means of the person and his status, and the cost of the harm done to the property, body, and honor [of the victim], after which a church penance should follow; the same punishment is due the individual who knows about the sorcery but does not denounce the sorcerer.

3.14 EXCERPTS FROM THE SPIRITUAL REGULATION (1721)

Source: *PSZ*, vol. 6, no. 3718, in Alexander V. Muller, trans. and ed., *The Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 7, 13, 15–16, 19–20, 29. Brackets in the original. © 1972. Reprinted with permission of the University of Washington Press.

In a dramatic piece of legislation announced on January 25, 1721, and published later that year,[62] Peter the Great and his ecclesiastical adviser Feofan Prokopovich announced the creation of an Ecclesiastical College (later renamed the Most Holy Governing Synod), which was to function as a committee of bishops and, in place of a patriarch, was to lead the Russian Orthodox Church. In effect, it turned the church into a bureaucratic arm of the state, although bishops enjoyed some leeway in determining some aspects of church policy and the relationship between state and church was at various times tense. Prokopovich envisioned the Synod as having legal authority equal to that of the Senate. The Spiritual Regulation, which created the Synod, laid out the responsibilities of the bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church, among which figured measures to combat so-called superstitions. This document constituted the next major assault on the phenomenon of demonic possession, broadening the definition contained in the 1715 decree (see Document 3.12) by labeling all shriekers as perpetrators of superstition and by implication branding them as fraudulent, referring to demonic possession as the stuff of "nonsense." Once again, witchcraft and sorcery are not mentioned in connection with demonic possession. Neither are they listed as superstitions in and of themselves, because to have done so would have demoted witchcraft, which, if harmful, was still a crime punishable by death. Rather, shriekers are lumped together with dubious miracles and "noncertified [intact] corpses" that people venerated as saints, as they had been in 1716. In the spirit of the Catholic Reformation, the ecclesiastical reforms urged bishops to stress sacramental confession and education in place of all dubious practices. They were also supposed to hand demoniacs over to civil authorities for sentencing and to impose penances on those who sincerely repented.

The regulation or statute of the Spiritual College by which it may know its obligations, those of all ecclesiastical officers, and those of laymen, insofar as they are subject to spiritual administration, and moreover, by which it is to function in the disposition of its affairs

Common matters

The Lives of the Saints shall be examined to determine whether any of them are falsely fabricated tales, telling what was not, or telling what is contrary to Orthodox Christian teaching, or whether they lack content and are

deserving of ridicule. Such tales shall be exposed and prohibited, with a disclosure of the falsity found in them. For such blatantly false tales are contrary to sound teaching….

Wherever any holy relics appear to be doubtful, they shall be examined, for much of this is falsified….

As regards holy icons, what is written in the vows of bishops being consecrated shall be examined.

This also shall be watched, that it is not to be done in the future as it has been done previously: It is said that some bishops, to help poor churches, or for new buildings, have commanded that there be searched out the revelation of an icon in the wilderness or at a spring; and on account of the discovery itself, they have testified that this icon is miraculous.

… However there is no need to enumerate all the irregularities here. In a word, whatever may be called by the term "superstition," is that which is superfluous, not essential to salvation, devised by hypocrites only for their own interest, beguiling the simple people, and like snowdrifts, hindering passage along the right path of truth. All this is incorporated in the present survey as a general evil since it can be found among all classes….

Matters pertaining to bishops

A bishop is obliged to observe that which he promised with an oath to observe at his consecration, that is, in reference to monks, that they do not wander aimlessly, that unnecessary churches, with no people, are not built, that false miracles are not contrived for holy icons. Likewise he shall be well on the watch for squallers (*i.e., shriekers*), noncertified corpses, and all other suchlike.

To do all that more efficiently, a bishop must order in all cities that stewards, or ecclesiastical superintendents, especially appointed for that purpose, just as if they were spiritual fiscals, are to oversee all those things and report to him, the bishop. If something like that appears anywhere, whoever desires to conceal it shall do so under penalty of the ban.

… A bishop [on visitation] shall inquire of the clergy and other persons whether superstitious practices are carried on anywhere. Are squallers to be

found? Is there anyone who, for ill-gotten gain, displays false miracles connected with icons, wells, springs, etc.? And he shall forbid such nonsense, with the threat of malediction against recalcitrants who resist.

3.15 HOLY SYNOD'S DECREE AGAINST THE SWIMMING OF INDIVIDUALS (1721)

Source: *PSZ*, vol. 6, no. 3771; this excerpt expands on the passages translated in James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 292.

In the spirit of the 1721 Spiritual Regulation (see Document 3.14) and previous legislation, secular and religious authorities attempted to eradicate what they believed to be popular superstitious practices. The passage below addresses a practice that was not only deemed superstitious but also illegal in nature. The decree against the ducking or "swimming" of people against their will during the week after Easter, originated in the Senate and was affirmed by the ecclesiastical members of the newly created Holy Synod on April 17, 1721. It is fascinating for what it says and for what it leaves out. As we see with reference to ancient Rus (see Document 1.3) and early eighteenth-century Ukrainian Podole/Podillia in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (see Document 4.3), suspected witches were often subjected to the water ordeal. The document below mentions neither witches nor the extralegality of the practice. Rather than emphasize witchcraft, the authors drew another parallel with ancient Rus. They noted that it had been a pagan custom to sacrifice a victim who had been dunked to the fertility and harvest deity Ivan Kupalo—the name of which is derived from the verb to bathe (*kupat'*)—and that this disorderly and impious practice was still ubiquitous in the Russian realm. Communal bathing was certainly a part of the festivities surrounding the celebration of Kupalo on the first Sunday after Pentecost, and water rites were integral to the celebration of Midsummer's Eve, which was dedicated to Kupalo and had been changed in the Orthodox calendar to celebrate St. John the Baptist. But what is striking in the passage is the identification of individuals who were subjected to dunking and often drowned as a result as those who "missed matins during Easter (or Bright) Week." We know that parishioners would have suspected these religious delinquents to have been witches or sorcerers and may have subjected them to the water ordeal. Ethnographic evidence from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries points to the fact that Russian Orthodox believers imbued the glorious early morning Easter service with the power of unmasking witches just when the

priest emerged from the Royal Doors carrying the Holy Gifts and vanquished evil.[63] By drawing attention to a much older and "ungodly" pagan practice, the authors of the decree might have been trying not to publicize and thereby to encourage a custom more clearly associated with Christian beliefs in malefic magic, to which they still subscribed. Significantly, they were trying to stamp out an extralegal practice.

Confirmation of the Senate's [order] that parish priests through public decrees [prohibit] people from dunking and drenching [others] throughout Holy Easter Week

The Holy Governing Synod was ordered to inform the people: it has come to the attention of the Holy Governing Synod that in the Russian realm, in both the towns and villages, there is a certain disorderly custom which proceeds from ignorance and some degree of indecent conduct (*editors' translation up to this point*): whoever misses matins during Easter Week is, by way of a penalty, dunked in the river or in a pond; and though the simple folk do this as a form of entertainment, this idle pastime is nonetheless not only injurious to health, but contemptuous of human life. For by being unsuspectingly dunked in deep water, people sometimes flounder or drown; and by a sudden drenching with water sleepy and befuddled persons lose their wits. And this is done as though in remembrance of disgusting idols, among which was the idol Kupalo, to whom on a certain day the people offered a sacrificial victim who had been bathed by them, as described at length in the Kievan chronicle. But since in those … times the Russian people had still but imperfectly received the holy Orthodox faith, which had not been firmly implanted in them, and which now by the mercy of God shines forth in holiness, they could not forsake this ignorant custom. Therefore this impious and injurious custom must be eradicated from the Russian realm; (*editors' translation after this point*) as a result of which all parish priests must strictly carry this out, upon pain of significant penalties [if they do not], with all means at their disposal to deter their parishioners from this ungodly custom.

3.16 EMPRESS ANNA IOANNOVNA'S DECREE AGAINST WIZARDRY (1731)

Source: *PSZ*, vol. 8, no. 5761; and *PSPR*, vol. 8, no. 2451.

In spite of its Enlightenment trappings and its emphasis on the idea that magic might be a fraudulent act perpetrated by con artists masquerading as witches, Anna's decree of May 20, 1731, is strikingly similar to the Muscovite decrees in a number of ways. In particular, it defines magicians and their clients as equally culpable. Starting in the late fifteenth century, Russian Orthodox penitentials (see the documents in 3.1) regularly warned people against inviting magicians to their homes. The mid-sixteenth-century *Domostroi* (see the documents in 3.1) also condemned people who hired magicians equally with those who practiced magic. Equal opprobrium was directed at practitioners and clients in the findings of the 1551 Stoglav Church Council (see Document 3.4) and seventeenth-century laws as well (see Documents 3.5 and 3.9). In practice, however, Muscovite courts punished magical specialists far more harshly than their clients. Addressing this lapse, Peter's 1716 Military Statute (see the first document in 3.13) insisted that the client receive the same punishment as the sorcerer he or she hired. The 1731 decree perpetuated that principle.

Anna's decree built on the presumption that witchcraft involved fraud and deception but shifted the emphasis. In the 1715 decree, Peter condemned certain types of shriekers as fakes (see Document 3.12). The 1731 decree extended the charge of charlatanry from the supposedly possessed to those purporting to wield magical powers. Yet Anna's statute is riddled with contradictions, in one line deriding wizards as frauds and swindlers, in the next taking their powers deadly seriously. It describes the magicians' practices and teachings as being "injurious to the soul" and "soul-destroying" and the harm that the false wizards wreak as being very real.

In an interesting development Anna, in November 1737, attempted to strengthen the system of surveillance and denunciation by reiterating the provisions of Peter's 1721 Spiritual Regulation (see Document 3.14) against so-called superstitious practices, particularly shriekers (who often identified witches or sorcerers), false miracles, supposedly holy springs, and veneration of unverified whole corpses as saints. However, continuing to vacillate in assigning blame, she did not add wizards, sorcerers, or witches to the list of practitioners of superstition. Instead she targeted their accusers and alleged victims, the shriekers. Anna was irked that the number of shriekers had actually increased and accused clerics and monks of disobeying the laws by saying prayers of exorcism over the demoniacs. The 1737 law ordered that clerics, including newly appointed superintendents (*zakashchiki*) and fiscals, were to be ever vigilant in reporting (which in essence meant denouncing) shriekers and other superstitious practices. To this end, bishops were required to report twice annually to the Holy Synod about the state of religious practices in their dioceses.[64]

In spite of the reprimand and subsequent reminders to clerics and bishops, such reports were irregularly dispatched and generally perfunctory. It was the rare diocesan report that informed on shriekers. Clerics generally took seriously the phenomenon of demonic possession, whether caused by witchcraft or not, and did not view shriekers as frauds. In 1758, Veniamin, bishop of Archangel and Kholmogory, did bring a case

involving an epidemic of nineteen shriekers to the Archangel governor's attention, but he begged that the possessed not be punished as criminals. Using an unusual rationalist argument, he insisted that the individuals were suffering from natural illnesses and thus required "the means to cure those illnesses."[65]

It is apparent to Her Imperial Majesty that in Russia many people, having forgotten divine wrath and eternal torment for [committing] evil acts, have presented themselves as being knowledgeable about wizardry and have promised simple people that they can use all sorts of methods [in this regard], as a result of which these people summon them to their homes and ask them for assistance in their evil (*zlykh*) intentions. Those false wizards make promises to them, in return for which they receive significant profits. And those who are tempted by these methods injurious to the soul (*dushevrednye*) will incur pointless losses, divine wrath, and, according to civil law, punishment, while others, depending on [the severity of] their guilt will also [suffer] torture. Because of this, by decree of Her Imperial Majesty, the Governing Senate orders that the Senate publish decrees regarding the above [matter] all over the Russian Empire in order that henceforth no one is to summon openly or secretly any kind of false wizards to his home, nor frequent their [the wizards'] homes, nor have any kind of discussion about wizardry with them while on the road and learn anything from their soul-destroying teachings.

And if henceforth, any one, having no fear of the wrath of God nor any dread of this decree of Her Imperial Majesty, summons wizards to him or goes to their homes for magical assistance, or converses with them while on the road and follows their teaching, or if any wizards wreak harm for their own personal ends or on behalf of someone else, then these swindlers (*obmanshchiki*) will be sentenced to death by burning. And those, who request their [services] for what they sinfully imagine will benefit them will be severely punished: [they will be] beaten with the knout, while others, by virtue of the [extreme] severity of their guilt, will be sentenced to death. If the aforementioned deceivers have dealings with such impious acts but acknowledge their guilt and have not been reported [to the authorities] by others, their guilt will be absolved without [their having to undergo] any kind of torture.

3.17 CATHERINE II'S 1767 INSTRUCTIONS TO THE LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION AND THE HOLY SYNOD'S RESPONSE

Sources: *PSZ*, vol. 18, no. 12949; and *Sbornik Imperatorskago russkago istoricheskago obshchestva*, vol. 43:53, article 9; quoted in A. V. Popov, Sud i nakazaniia za prestupleniia protiv very i nravstvennosti po russkomu pravu (Kazan, 1904), 267. The last paragraph is a slightly modified translation by Bliss in Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics," 66.

In 1767, Catherine II issued a lengthy set of instructions to her newly formed Legislative Commission, which was tasked with codifying Russia's laws but was disbanded two years later due to an inability to reconcile differing interests among Russia's social estates. To guide the commission's work, the empress had laid out her detailed thinking about the importance of the rule of law and other matters that made an empire great. After noting the need for toleration of different faiths and the general problems inherent in religious prosecution, she devoted five articles to the subject of magic and wizardry. Here she demonstrated the absurdity of witchcraft accusations with concrete examples from the late medieval empires of Byzantium and Nicaea and pointed out that it was impossible to provide evidence concerning witchcraft. Catherine's juxtaposition of the words "wizardry" and "heresy" in article 497 is intriguing in the context of the rest of the paragraph. It is quite possible that she intended "heresy" to be more narrowly understood as "witchcraft" in this instance, a notion that would have been comprehended by Russians and Europeans alike. Accusers in Russia did sometimes refer to witches as heretics. Addressing her concerns to representatives of all estates within the empire, Catherine included the clergy. The Holy Synod's response to her "Instructions" interpreted them to mean that limitations should be placed on punishments for sorcery, but it did not address her desire to put more legal restrictions on accusations of witchcraft. The bishops also advocated still lighter punishments for those who sought the services of sorcerers but did not go as far as to dismiss witchcraft as a crime. They preferred instead to continue the approach that had been used since Peter the Great's 1716 Military Statute (see the first document in 3.13) and was on display in Anna's ambivalent 1731 legislation on the subject (see Document 3.16). They distinguished between a frivolous and imaginary variety (which the earlier decrees defined precisely) and one that appeared to be very real (although the previous decrees left the definition of this latter kind of magic opaque, only hinting at it). It would appear that the bishops were trying to please the empress, but were not sold on her skepticism regarding witchcraft.

The 1767 Instructions

Article 497: Extreme caution is necessary in the investigation of cases involving wizardry and heresy. Accusations involving these two crimes can unduly disturb order [and infringe on] the liberty and welfare of citizens and can also be the cause of innumerable tyrannies, unless limits of the law are placed on them. Since this type of accusation does not correspond directly to a citizen's actions, but more so to the impressions that people have about his character, it becomes highly dangerous, [the danger of which is measured] in proportion to the commoners' ignorance. And in such a case a citizen will always find himself in danger, because neither the most exemplary behavior nor the purest morals can safeguard him against the suspicions connected to these crimes.

Article 498: In the reign of the Byzantine emperor Manuel Komnenos (*1143–80*), the protostrator was accused of conspiring against the emperor, whereby he employed certain magical secrets to render individuals invisible.

Article 499: The history of Constantinople informs us that after a revelation was published, the miraculous power ceased to exist because of a particular individual's magical act, and he and his son were condemned to death. On how many different factors, which the judge was obliged to examine, did this crime rest? (1) That the miraculous power had ceased to exist. (2) That wizardry was involved in its cessation. (3) That wizardry could [thus] destroy the miraculous power. (4) That the individual was [therefore] a wizard. (5) Finally, that he was responsible for this magical act.

Article 500: Emperor Theodore Laskaris (*first emperor of Nicaea, 1204/5–1221/22*) attributed his illness to magic. The accused persons had no other means of proving their innocence than to handle red-hot irons without burning themselves. The most uncertain crime in the world has become conjoined with the most uncertain of proofs.

Holy Synod's response

The previous (*Code of Law* [*1716?*]) and other laws prescribe a harsh punishment for sorcerers and enchanters of weapons and of other such. But in many closed cases it is [evident] that such people fall into such acts from folly alone and from flattering themselves with fatuous and reckless hope, when indeed no action desirous to them that they elucidate in their idle writings has happened or could happen, except only in reverie, wherefore they witlessly claim that it has actually been accomplished. For this reason the Maternal Eminence, Her Imperial Majesty, requests that such frivolous people be accorded relief, although they should not remain without punishment. However, those who teach and act shall be dealt a graver sentence and those who listen to such as [them], a lighter one.

3.18 SENATE'S RULING ADMONISHING JUDGES (1770)

Sources: *PSPR*, series 3, vol. 1, nos. 465 and 491; and *PSZ*, vol. 19, no. 13427.

Catherine II's rationalist understanding of witchcraft took a firmer hold in the law with the March 14, 1770, ruling by the Senate on a late 1760s case involving witchcraft and demonic possession that had overtaken a couple of areas in the far northern province of Ustiug (now part of the Vologda region), which at that time was under the administration of the Archangel Governorate. The matter had been adjudicated at the local level, with a recommendation that the offending sorcerers be punished. Since the local bishop was consulted about the nature of the penances he would levy on the alleged sorcerers and the bishop felt that he did not have complete jurisdiction over the issue, he had informed the Holy Synod of the case. The religious authorities, like their secular counterparts, focused their attention on the alleged sorcerers rather than the shriekers or possessed individuals who had identified the sorcerers. Convinced that the accused were guilty of "causing evil" and inflicting suffering on their victims, the Synod and the local officials passed the case on to the secular authorities in the Senate for "proper investigation."

Once the case came to their attention, the members of the Senate assessed it in a very different light than had the local and clerical authorities. They admonished and punished the secular officials for taking seriously the absurd evidence presented in the case. Calling witchcraft a "superstition" to which simple-minded people ascribed and which duped even the judges, who should have known better, they pointed out the evil of torturing and punishing innocent people for an unprovable crime. The senators

reminded not only these judges but judges "everywhere" of their duty to follow the laws concerning the investigation and prosecution of fraudulent shriekers. They likewise pointed to the duplicity of the "sorcerers," who claimed false magical powers and swindled their customers by taking advantage of their superstitious beliefs. These elements, rather than witchcraft per se, constituted their crime. The Senate ruling thus both stripped away the ambiguity of the 1731 law (see Document 3.16) in defining a fraudulent sorcerer and pinpointed the failure of government officials and the Orthodox Church to denounce shriekers. At the same time, the very nature of the case underscored the limitations of the law and continuing beliefs in sorcery and witchcraft at all levels of Russian society.

Holy Synod order of January 23,1769, "regarding the instructions to his Grace Ioann, the bishop of Ustiug, to admonish individuals engaged in sorcery and magic by confining them to monasteries with appropriate penances and allowing them to take Holy Communion only after a sincere repentance"

According to Her Imperial Majesty's decree, the Holy Synod heard the denunciation sent by Ioann, the bishop of Ustiug, of the peasants Egor Pystin, Zakhar Martiushev, the maiden Avdotia Bazhukova, and the soldier's wife Avdotia Pystina of Pecherskaia Volost (*canton or township*) in Iarensk District, who dabbled in magic and denied God and engaged in other impious acts, and who today, according to their voluntary repentance and change of heart, wish to believe in God and to return to the Christian faith and completely remove themselves from diabolical service. Not having the right to accept their request [on his own], the bishop asks the Holy Synod for resolution. From what was recorded of their interrogation in this denunciation, their answers regarding the alleged sorcery they practiced are full of dissimilarities and implausible contradictions…. The Synod is of the opinion that those individuals who merely learned this sorcery, who did not teach others, and who are sincere in their repentance should be accepted back into the fold of the holy Church, and for those who, according to their testimonies, together with the alleged sorcery abjured God and the Christian faith, removed their crosses, [as well as] cursed their father and mother, the moon and sun, earth and water are to be exiled from the Ustiug Diocese to appropriate monasteries for a year's worth of hard labor; and they are ordered to attend church services and to confess during all four fasts but are

not allowed to take communion (except before death's door) neither during the time of their incarceration in the monasteries nor once released for a total of five years, unless they demonstrate during that penance of fasting and prayers sincere repentance, at which time the Ustiug bishop may reduce their penance.

Excerpt from the Holy Synod report of May 15, 1769, "regarding the dispatch of the sorcerers Egor Pystin and his friends to the Ustiug Provincial Chancellery and the communications to the Senate regarding the adoption of measures to stop the spread of similar superstitions"

The Archangel Territorial Chancellery … demanded that if Pystin is guilty of this sorcery and if others appear to be guilty of this as well, then on the investigation's conclusion, they should be sent under guard to the Ustiug Provincial Chancellery for civil punishment. The investigation … conducted by Mayor Komarov, a friend of the governor of Iarensk, and the priest Vasilii Matveev, representative of the Iarensk spiritual office, confirmed that all the individuals identified by these sorcerers are bewitched and that none of them was pretending or being fraudulent because their illnesses were observed to be extreme and severe, and all the sorcerers admitted … that the bewitched individuals were suffering in extremis as a result of the hexes on them [and] were not exhibiting any pretense or fraud. On top of this, both the Ustiug Consistory and secular authorities in Ustiug are quite aware that not only in those locations in which the sorcerers arose but also in the town of Ustiug a large number of individuals—mainly women from good merchant homes—are suffering from such bewitchment. There have previously been many sorcerers in the Iarensk governor's office, who were dealt with according to the law …

The Synod ordered that the sorcerers—the peasant Egor Pystin and others—in the hands of the Ustiug Consistory … be promptly dispatched under guard to the Ustiug Provincial Chancellery … because bewitchment is dangerous to people and these sorcerers have explicitly admitted their guilt in causing evil …, it follows that a secular court should conduct a narrow investigation…. The Senate is to be informed about this … and the

fact that … an unusually large number of people in the town of Ustiug … are suffering as a result of such sorcery so that a proper examination of the issue can take place.

The Senate's May 14, 1770, ruling "Admonishing judges for improper investigations of and decisions in cases dealing with witchcraft and sorcery and the need to punish false shriekers with the lash"

The Governing Senate received petitions from the Provincial Chancellery in [the town of] Great Ustiug [that came] initially from the Iarensk governor's office and the consistory in Great Ustiug concerning individuals involved in sorcery and their bewitching of people in Pechera and Ustnemsk Volosts in Iarensk District—namely, the peasants Egor Pystin, Zakhar Martiushev, Stefan and Ilia Ignatov, the soldier's wife Avdotia Pystina, the wives Feodosia Mezentsova [and] Anna Ignatova, and the girl Avdotia Bazhukova, and their testimony before the Senate in St. Petersburg. Going over all the testimony, the Senate ruled as follows: to its great regret, the Senate finds, on the one hand, an incorrigible superstition among many simple-minded people, especially commoners, regarding hexing by witchcraft, in concert with the perfidy and manifest deception of those who employ this [witchcraft] either out of evil or greed. And, on the other hand, it views with extreme displeasure not only the illegal actions of these fraudulent sorcerers but also the ignorance and inexcusable carelessness on the part of the judges themselves, who will seriously accept a palpable lie and something completely imaginary as the truth, and, consequently, a meaningless fantasy as a case worthy of judicial attention. And for no good reason they will conduct a completely disreputable investigation, which results in not only the dangerous torturing of innocent people but also in nothing save a stronger affirmation of this vile superstition among simpletons. Instead … they [the judges] should be obliged to try to eradicate it [this superstition] on the bases of knowledge and clear laws. Under such circumstances it is necessary that the Governing Senate make an example of and explain the following case … in order to avert such barbarism henceforth and to forewarn judges:

(1) Referring now not to the simple peasants but rather to those conducting the investigations in the Iarensk governor's office, as indeed any sensible person ought to know, it is impossible for anyone to bewitch people by any supernatural means, especially in the absence of such things as adding any materials or compounds detrimental to human health to food. Likewise, they should know and remember the existing precise and clear law regarding shriekers expressed in the decrees of 1722 and 1737.

(2) According to the simple people's superstitions, which have been instilled in them by means of hearsay and upbringing, many imagine themselves to be prone to bewitchment by sorcery through different means. And when someone has heard about this since childhood, he blindly believes it. In contrast, the cunning ones turn this simplemindedness to their advantage by intentionally feigning skill in the sorcerer's art and for their own gain inspire reverence from and fear among simpletons.

(3) It is evident that in this region, because of the existence of these perfidious deceivers, the bewitchment of individuals is allegedly taking place through a demon's release of vermin into the air; these fraudulent sorcerers create the impression, undoubtedly by spreading rumors, that they can save others from great suffering. Once released in the air, the vermin can supposedly only enter those bodies and do their harm on those who leave their homes without praying to God and saying the Jesus prayer or [who] curse with foul language. In reasoning through such circumstances, it is astounding how much people are affected by such thinking and how judges, in particular, have not been able to recognize the contradictions manifested therein and at the same time have not been able to recognize the evidence concerning this witchcraft as being ungrounded and contemptible, worthy of laughter, but instead esteem it as a worthy story.

(4) The aforementioned vermin and supposedly truthful testimony about charms and hexes were sent here under the seal of the Ustiug Provincial Chancellery. But when the seal was broken in the Senate, they [the vermin] proved to be nothing other than ordinary dried flies, which the woman had Fedosia Mezentsova produce in order to satisfy the demands of the judge, Mayor Komarov, and to save herself from more torture…. He [the judge] was also so superstitious and so unsophisticated that he could not differentiate them [the flies] from vermin and was not embarrassed to present them to the higher authorities.

(5) The beginning of this irrational case and simplistic investigation began when several dissolute lasses and women pretending to be bewitched shrieked out the names of the above-mentioned unfortunate people out of spite and in a drunken state and, besides that, called them "fathers" [and] "mothers." Hearing about this, neighbors threatened them [the accused witches] and demanded that they voluntarily admit to bewitching [the girls and women]. Then came the hundredmen (*elected local police*) who, dissatisfied with the threats, began to flog and torment [the accused witches], even though they did not have the authority to do so. Unable to endure the beatings and also fearful of not only a more bitter fate but also … torture [once they were taken] to the city [office], with which the hundredmen threatened them, these completely

innocent and oppressed individuals were forced to admit that they were sorcerers and that they had bewitched the shriekers; they hoped that by confessing they would be able to avoid being taken to the city and tortured. However, since they were dispatched there [to the city] and interrogated under the lash and were afraid of complete ruin from contradicting [what they had said earlier], they had no choice but to uphold their previous dangerous testimony…. If the Iarensk governor's office had obeyed the law, it would have investigated the shriekers and not those whom the shriekers had identified….

For these reasons, and so that there should henceforth be no pretext for such nonsense, which is based solely on perfidious malice and deception, to spread further, harm others, and greatly tempt society, the heretofore published decrees [of 1722 and 1737] shall be duly implemented and the evildoers shall be punished…. The governor, Assessor Dmitriev, and his assistant, Second Mayor Komarov, and the secretary (*who would have approved the lower officials' rulings*) … are to be dismissed for dereliction of duty. For their insidious evil deeds, the female shriekers and pretenders, by the authority of the above-mentioned decrees of 1722 and 1737, are to be publicly flogged in their place of residence before a communal assembly. And henceforth wherever shriekers appear, that punishment is to be carried out on the basis of these same decrees, and their testimonies should not only be disbelieved but also should not even be entertained. And those hundredmen and elders, who on their own authority whipped the innocent, are for such impudence to be punished with cudgels without mercy in the same locations before all the inhabitants and they can no longer be elected hundredmen and elders.

3.19 CATHERINE II'S DECREES (1775 AND 1782)

Sources: *PSZ*, vol. 20, no. 14392; and vol. 21, no. 15379. Article 397 is adapted from Bliss's translation in Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics," 69. Brackets in the original.

The excerpts from two substantial law codes, which reorganized the map of the Russian Empire to create thirty-eight distinct provinces (expanded to fifty in 1796) and their governance and defined police responsibilities for towns, introduced the new court of equity, which was to have jurisdiction over witchcraft and definitions of witchcraft. The dramatic restructuring of provincial administration came in response to the massive Cossack-led Pugachev Rebellion of 1773–74, which spread like wildfire from Kazan and Orenburg to the southern Volga region and the mining communities at the foot of the Ural Mountains. The rebellion swept up Cossacks, peasants, and various Turkic peoples in protest against a centralizing state that had stripped Cossack communities along the Volga of privileges and increased their service requirements and that had begun to introduce serfdom to the eastern frontiers. Catherine had no choice but to squash the uprising with a full-scale military operation. Determined to maintain law and order and avoid another such rebellion, she sought to address Russia's chronic undergovernment by devolving authority to noblemen in their local communities. This major decentralization of authority in Russia included the creation of new provincial and district courts, including the specialized court of equity at the provincial level that was charged with providing milder sentences in criminal and civil cases involving witchcraft, minors, and the mentally challenged and thus demonstrating the sovereign's humanity and mercy.

Statute on Provincial Administration (November 7, 1775), chapter 26

Article 397. The court of conscience (*equity*) adjudicates by the law, as do all other courts, but since the court of conscience is established as a bulwark of private and personal safety, and for that reason, the rules of the court of conscience shall in all instances be: (1) a general love of mankind; (2) respect for the persons of others, as human beings; [and] (3) revulsion against the oppression and subjection of mankind.

Article 399. Cases relative to such offenders, who by dint of some unfortunate occurrence or by the confluence of various circumstances have fallen into committing misdeeds for which the punishments are more severe than the crimes themselves warrant, such as those committed by lunatics, or minors, and those involving sorcerers, or sorcery, inasmuch as they consist of stupidity, deception, and ignorance, shall be dispatched to the court of equity, which has the sole right to make a judgment on the aforementioned.

1782 Police Statute (April 8, 1782)

Article 224. Confirms the prohibition of witchcraft, or sorcery, or any other deception resulting from superstition, or ignorance, or fraud, including tracing [a footprint] on the ground, [enchanting by] smoke, frightening with monstrosities, fortune-telling by air or water; dream interpretation; treasure hunting [by magic]; ghost hunting; or whispering (*i.e., casting spells*) over paper, herbs or drink. See art. 266.

Article 266. If someone commits witchcraft, or sorcery, or any other deception resulting from superstition, or ignorance, or fraud, including tracing [a footprint] on the ground, [enchanting by] smoke, frightening with monstrosities, fortune-telling by air or water; dream interpretation; treasure hunting [by magic]; ghost hunting; or whispering over paper, herbs or drink, he is to be sent to the court where he will be dealt with as the laws dictate.

3.20 EXCERPTS FROM THE CRIMINAL LAWS: 1842, 1845, AND 1885 EDITIONS

Sources: GAVO, f. 175, op. 2, d. 42 (1844–45), ll. 89 ob.–91; *Ulozhenie o nakazaniiakh ugolovnykh i ispravitel'nykh* (St. Petersburg: 1845 and 1885 editions) (1885 version, part 7, section 2, articles 933 and 934 in square brackets).

Catherine II's project of codifying Russian laws since 1649 was finally realized in 1830 with the publication of the *Complete Collected Laws of the Russian Empire*. That momentous assemblage of decrees in chronological order laid the groundwork for the first systematized fifteen-volume *Digest of Laws of the Russian Empire*, which appeared in 1835; it was organized by topic rather than chronology. Volume 15 focused on criminal laws. The 1835 *Digest* was, however, full of inconsistencies and outdated legal norms, as a result of which it was revised in 1842 and repeatedly thereafter, beginning in 1857. A complementary *Code of Punitive and Correctional Punishments*, outlining specific punishments for various crimes, was published in 1845. It, too, underwent changes as

legal experts attempted to bring Russian criminal law closer to its European counterparts, although murder, rape, armed robbery, and arson were not categorized as capital offenses. The death penalty had been more or less abolished under Empress Elizabeth Petrovna in the mid-eighteenth century, but it could still be levied by a court of law and then had to be reviewed by the ruler. Successive rulers typically commuted the sentence except when a crime challenged the political or social order. Between 1825 and 1905, over eight hundred people were executed, mainly on the authority of military courts, which had gained jurisdiction over cases concerning violations of social and political order. These violations involved crimes against the state (including terrorism after the assassination of Alexander II in 1881), heinous criminal actions, and serious violations of quarantine laws such as pillaging and looting.[66] Russia had to wait until 1864 for reforms that introduced trials by jury, adversarial procedure, and an independent judiciary and bar. The Imperial School of Jurisprudence, which trained legal experts for the government, opened its doors only in 1835.

The 1845 penal code provided a major modification of the witchcraft statutes, including those involving *klikushestvo* or demonic possession. The language preserved some of the Catherinian language (see the documents in 3.19) but differentiated between degrees of guilt and outcomes of magic, setting for the first time standard punishments for each degree and for recidivism, adding a church penance in certain cases. In these respects, the statutes can be best compared with the 1725 proposal by military officials, which were never implemented (see the second document in 3.13). By and large, the 1845 code kept Catherine II's notion of mercy with regard to the practice of magic and witchcraft by prescribing milder punishments than previous legislation had advocated. For most witchcraft-related infractions, the code mandated what it defined as "correctional" or reformative punishments, as opposed to punitive ones. It advocated either temporary incarceration in a prison or in what was termed a "house of correction," a place of incarceration involving forced labor. In a larger context, "out of 260 categories of crime, only 54 were punished by a term in one of these" correctional institutions.[67] Clearly, the authorities still judged witchcraft to be somewhat dangerous. The harshest punishment for witchcraft—one that was perceived to be "punitive" rather than correctional in nature—entailed the loss of all rights and permanent exile to the far reaches of Siberia. For violators who came from the nonprivileged social estates (townspeople and peasants), an additional punishment was mandated: a public lashing prior to the exile. These stern penalties were prescribed for anyone who used sorcery or religious authority to incite "alarm, agitation, or despondency, or disobedience to the prescribed laws of the realm," all of which the autocratic state perceived as a challenge to its authority. The extremity of the sentences for what might be considered political sorcery represents a stark contrast to the relatively mild (though still onerous) punishments for other types of witchcraft: incarceration in an institution of involuntary forced labor for up to two years. Other infractions drew startlingly mild chastisement; in the case of murder using a magical potion, the law required only a church penance! It is interesting that the 1885 edition, issued after the emancipation of the serfs, reduced the sentence even further in the case of a potion leading to death. Given that witchcraft cases now occurred almost exclusively in the countryside and among peasants, these

hierarchies of punishments might seem to suggest that the imperial government did not value the lives of its peasant population either before or after emancipation. While it is unarguably true that the newly emancipated peasantry received a shabby second-class citizenship, the issue here was a little more complicated. After emancipation the state was no longer prosecuting alleged witches in its courts but was instead defending individuals against false accusations of witchcraft. The crime of murder had been disassociated from magic, which in turn was no longer seen as a serious legal offense. Murder by bewitchment was no longer a plausible legal charge, while attempted or lethal poisoning or other forms of murder previously ascribed to bewitchment would now be prosecuted in a regular criminal court.

The documents presented below include excerpts from the 1842 edition of volume 15 of the *Digest of Laws* on criminal laws, as well as from the 1845 and 1885 editions of the supplemental penal code. The first document comes from a transcription by a scribe in the Vologda court of equity, who kept a handy précis of specific laws that were used in adjudicating cases of witchcraft. They do not pertain to witchcraft specifically but generally to legal principles of evidence, guilt, and sentencing. This document is followed by articles from the 1845 and 1885 editions of the penal code that pertain to witchcraft. The shared language of the 1845 and 1885 versions is presented first in nonitalic script; all italicized words that follow (excluding those in parentheses, which represent the editors' voice) belong to the 1845 edition and the nonitalicized materials in square brackets following the italics pertain to the 1885 version. If a particular law also appeared in the 1863 and the 1884 editions, that information is also included (just as it appeared in the 1885 version). Please note that each edition of the penal code renumbered specific laws and articles as new laws were inserted and others deleted.

Précis of several key articles in the 1842, vol. 15, edition of the *Digest of Laws*

Art. 914. Everyone is obligated to apprise the appropriate authority about the soundness of the evidence of a crime. That simple reporting does not oblige its author to prove the crime or to be responsible in the event that it cannot be proven.

Art. 924. Every denunciation should be based on specific and clear-cut evidence.

Art. 1169. No one should be forced to undergo punishment without clear-cut evidence or specific pieces of evidence of a crime.

Art. 1170. Proof of guilt respects every opportunity to demonstrate a defendant's innocence.

Art. 1172. Proof of guilt is regarded to be inconclusive if it rules out the possibility of demonstrating a defendant's innocence.

Art. 1173. A single inconclusive proof of guilt should raise only doubt.

Art. 1175. Generally, the determination of the soundness of the evidence rests on the fact that the more serious the charge, the more sound the evidence must be.

Art. 1176. If the evidence is unreliable in proving a defendant's guilt, then do not punish him according to what the law prescribes for a proven crime because the general rule is that it is better that ten guilty persons escape than that one innocent person suffer.

Art. 1177. In the event there is some, but not complete, evidence against the defendant, the court can on the basis of the importance of that incriminating evidence leave it more or less under suspicion.

Art. 1194. The evidence of one witness is considered insufficient proof.

Art. 1207. Determination of whether something constitutes evidence or a sign of a crime according to the law depends on the following circumstances: (*here the scribe notes only one circumstance, the one most likely to appear in an accusation of witchcraft*) … when people blame a defendant for a crime on the basis of hearsay, evil rumors, it is important to be sure that that the rumors be plausible and not indicative of evil intention, enmity, hatred [on the part of the accuser], or of destitution.

Code of Punitive and Correctional Punishments **(1845 and 1885 editions), section VIII (Crimes against social [norms], part 3: The spreading of dangerous rumors, false displays of miracles, and other types of deception)**

Art. 1159 (1845) [Art. 933 (1885)]

He who, for the sake of profit, vainglory, or other personal gain, broadcasts something false or orders that something false be broadcast, be it about a miracle that supposedly has taken place, or if some display is prepared by means of deceit, whether his own or on his orders, and it is taken for a miracle by gullible people, such a one will be sentenced for this deception regarding sacred objects *to imprisonment in a house of correction (involving involuntary labor) for between six months to a year, depending*

on the degree of guilt and the type of action or degree of resulting corruption [1885 version: to imprisonment in jail from four to eight months].

A second conviction for this crime will result in the loss of some rights and privileges as outlined in article 53 [50] of this code (*for the upper classes or estates this involved loss of rank, distinctions, and political rights within the estate, with the extent of punishment determined by the severity of guilt*), and *incarceration in a house of correction for a year or two* [1885 version: incarceration in prison for between eight months and a year and four months]. In addition, in each instance the guilty person, if he is a Christian, will be assigned a church penance under the direction of his ecclesiastical superior in order to clear his conscience. [Also appeared in April 17, 1863 (39504), VII; and April 24, 1884 (2172).]

Art. 1160 (1845) [Art. 934 (1885)]

On the same grounds, the same sentences will be levied on those who, also for the sake of illicit profit or other personal gain, take advantage of some individuals' simplemindedness and gullibility by passing themselves off as wizards or sorcerers, if they utilize consecrated Christian objects to make their false prophecies, false omens, and other deceptions.

Art. 1161 (1845) [Art. 935 (1885)]

Those, who, although without violation of the due respect owed to holy or consecrated objects, nevertheless take advantage of the gullibility of simpleminded individuals and pass themselves off as wizards or sorcerers, present them [people] with illusory apparitions or prepare, give, or sell them bogus magical potions or other mixtures that supposedly have supernatural powers and actions, or any items that can be categorized as talismans, or other supposedly enchanted items will be sentenced in the first instance to arrest for between seven days and three months, and in the second to *incarceration in a house of correction from between six months to a year* [1885 version: imprisonment from four to eight months].

If however, there is proof that the use of those potions or other mixtures or other means could have had or were intended to have dangerous health consequences for any individual or several individuals, then those guilty in the preparation and administration or sale of them will be penalized with the loss of several rights and privileges as outlined in article 53 [50] of this code, and *incarceration in a house of correction for a year or two, also based on circumstances, which increase or decrease more or less with their [degree of] guilt* [1885 version: imprisonment from between eight months and one year and four months (statute 30, IV)]; when the use of these potions results in someone's death, then the guilty individual, if he be a Christian, also receives on top of that a church penance [to be carried out] under the direction of his ecclesiastical superior. [Also appeared in April 17, 1863 (39504), VII; and April 24, 1884 (2172).]

Commentary: Native Siberians and others who call themselves sorcerers or magicians, when they are only following the superstitious regulations of their own law and carry out the rites connected to them only for their co-religionists, will not be subject to the punishments defined in this statute.

Art. 1163 (1845) [Art. 937 (1885)]

Those so-called shriekers who denounce anyone, claiming that he caused them harm supposedly by means of sorcery, are sentenced for this malicious deception to *incarceration in a home of correction from between six months and a year* [1885 version: imprisonment from between four and eight months]. [Also appeared in April 17, 1863 (39504), VII; and April 24, 1884 (2172).]

Art. 1164 (1845) [Art. 938 (1885)]

He who presents himself as an individual endowed with some kind of supernatural miraculous strength or sanctity [and] tries through this deceit to create among the populace alarm, agitation, or despondency, or disobedience of the prescribed laws of the realm is to be subject to the loss of all rights pertaining to his status and is to be exiled [the 1885 and later

versions end here] to the remotest places of Siberia; if he is by law not exempt from physical punishment (*that is, if he does not enjoy the legal exemption given to nobles, clergy, and merchants of the first and second guilds*), his punishment is to be by the lash at the hand of the hangman in the measure determined by article 22 of this code for the first degree of punishment of this kind. If in the midst of this it is revealed that the guilty party had in mind one of the crimes against the government identified in the third part of this code, then he is to be given the punishment specified for this crime.

Chapter 4

WITCHCRAFT TRIALS' PROCESSES AND EXTRALEGAL PROSECUTION OF WITCHCRAFT

Complete Records

A. POLISH-LITHUANIAN COMMONWEALTH (PLC) AND THE HETMANATE

Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth

Accusations of witchcraft in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth came from private citizens, not from state representatives; in other words, they flowed into courts from society, rather than being part of a top-down witch hunt. Not all citizens had the same rights and privileges, however. The law protected noblemen and noblewomen against denunciations from their servants. According to Bartłomiej Groicki's *Ten postępek* (Guidelines for the magistrate courts), which were based on the *Carolina*, women could not initiate lawsuits except in their father's or husband's names and could testify only in the presence of male chaperones. All cases required at least two or

three credible witnesses, with seven being the optimal number. The law did not consider women to be reliable witnesses, but as the cases included in this volume demonstrate, they regularly served in this capacity. Finally, there were limits on the testimonies of Jews. Their testimony was to be considered only as a supplement to at least two credible testimonies from Christian men.[1]

Also in keeping with the model of the *Carolina*, Groicki's manual affirmed that once private citizens had charged individuals with witchcraft, an inquisitorial procedure should ensue. Suspected witches in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth could be prosecuted and sent to the torture chamber (located in the basement of a large town hall or in a cellar or barn in a smaller town or village) in order to elicit a confession. Groicki's manual lists the questions that witches were to be asked during the investigation, although Ukrainian trial records indicate that the courts hardly ever followed this prescription. Clearly, magistrates enjoyed some leeway in "develop[ing] their own local versions of Saxon Law," and their short-term and part-time services ensured that "even with a given town no strong tradition of practice could usually establish itself."[2]

In the section devoted to the preparation of the defendant for torture Groicki referred to witchcraft when he warned judges to be vigilant against criminals hiding on their bodies magical objects or talismans that could fortify them to withstand the pain brought on by torture. The Lithuanian Statutes of the sixteenth century voiced similar concerns, and spells for withstanding torture do survive, so the law apparently responded to actual practice. Accordingly, Groicki's manual advises judges to shave the criminal's body and search it for incriminating objects. However, this invasive investigative technique was also not widely adopted. According to Kateryna Dysa, it was mentioned in only one witchcraft case tried in seventeenth-century Ukrainian towns.[3]

The final mention of witchcraft in Groicki's manual appears in the article recommending various types of death penalties, depending on the nature of the crime. Grouped together with apostasy and poisoning, witchcraft was to be punished by burning at the stake. Trial records demonstrate that judges

were well aware of this legal norm. In many cases they referred to the older Magdeburg Law, which predated the *Carolina*, to support their decision to punish a witch with burning. Although the *Carolina* also prescribed burning at the stake for witchcraft (which, interestingly, it grouped with homosexuality and bestiality), in their rulings these judges referred instead to the older precedent of Magdeburg Law. However, they did not cite any specific article but rather gestured to some abstract "Magdeburg law/*Speculum Saxonum* article," or made up some incorrect reference.

Even in those cases where judges cited the correct norm, they often noted that out of mercy they were mitigating the sentence of death by fire to death by the sword. The distinction between the two death sentences was critical in a Christian society that did not yet practice cremation because death by fire and the scattering of an individual's ashes symbolized "a foretaste of hell" and seemingly deprived the witch of participation "in the general resurrection of the flesh."[4] More often, the magistrate judges referred to the death penalty of fire to threaten the accused, especially when they applied torture to ascertain the truth. They also used the threat as a deterrent against recidivism. They noted that for the time being the alleged witch would be pardoned and punished with a lighter penalty of a fine or flogging but that the appropriate punishment of burning at the stake would be applied if she were to indulge in criminal behavior again.

The Hetmanate (1654–1781) and its aftermath

While municipal courts in the autonomous Hetmanate continued to apply Magdeburg Law and other Polish-Lithuanian statutes, they also sometimes referred to Russian decrees. As Cossack elites accumulated more and more agricultural land in the countryside, the number of towns fell from 200 in 1723 to about 120 by 1783. Of these towns, only a dozen enjoyed Magdeburg Law rights of municipal autonomy, and even these few holdouts found their rights encroached on by Cossack administrations. Once Catherine II abolished the office of the hetman in 1764, she appointed Count Petr Aleksandrovich Rumiantsev (1725–1796) governor-general in an attempt to begin the integration of the area into the Russian Empire. The

new administrator in 1767 sought to combat what he labeled blind superstitions and to enforce the Lithuanian Statute, still one of the official codes of law for the region even after the Hetmanate was incorporated into the Russian Empire. These two goals were somewhat in tension with each other, since the 1588 Lithuanian Statute contained an article listing witchcraft as a crime. Rumiantsev himself only deepened the contradictions inherent in his efforts: he publicly tried two women—Evgenia Doroshenkova and Paraskevia Partilikha—for witchcraft. Rumiantsev's intention was to punish witchcraft as fraud and superstition, but paradoxically his actions may have had the unintended consequence of reinforcing beliefs in witchcraft. The governor-general also ordered that an explanation that all types of witchcraft, sorcery, and other uses of magic were in and of themselves harmless be published across Little Russia (Ukrainian regions in the Russian Empire). The announcements that belief in witchcraft and magic were patently false and that too many people suffered unnecessarily from these webs of lies was to be posted in public places and proclaimed in churches. Confusingly, all recognized practitioners of magic were to be arrested and sent to Hlukhiv (Glukhov in Russian), the center of the Little Russian Governorate, for swift punishment.[5] The administrative and legal integration of the Hetmanate into the structure of the Russian Empire took eighteen years, ending in 1781 with the abolition of the Little Russian Governorate. Even thereafter, however, the lands of the former Hetmanate continued to operate under the laws of the Lithuanian Statute, although Russian laws, including those involving witchcraft, also were invoked.

In addition to having different legal systems, the social order and economic system of the Hetmanate were distinctive from other areas in the empire. Members of the Cossack elite and rank-and-file, Orthodox clerics, and peasants populated the Hetmanate, where trends in socioeconomic development favored the elite families (numbering around one thousand) and Orthodox Church. Benefiting from privileged access to administrative and tax-farming positions and amassing private property, some in the form of land grants from the emperors and empresses, the wealthy were able to consolidate their economic and social standings. Orthodox monasteries

profited as well from royal land grants as well as land bequeathed by testators.

As the Hetmanate was increasingly absorbed into the Russian administrative and legal system, the lower strata increasingly fell into dependency and then found themselves enserfed, just as their Russian counterparts had been for over a century. Serfdom, which came with a ban on movement, was not formally imposed on the peasants and poor Cossacks until 1783, just after the abolition of the Hetmanate. Nevertheless, during the period of the Hetmanate's autonomy the growing peasant population (swelled by poorer Cossacks becoming debtors and dependent tenant laborers) gradually lost their freedoms. Peasants performed a set number of days of labor per week on the landed estates as well as made cash payments to their landlords. From 1721 onward, those who left church and elite lands forfeited any landed property they owned and from 1760 onward, they had to seek their landlords' permission to leave. Other provisions paved the way for formal serfdom, including the introduction of the poll or head tax on every adult male in 1765; the 1766 extension to elite Cossack families of the privilege to purchase villages and turn their free populations into serfs; and the 1770 authorization of a law that required runaway peasant tenants to be returned to their landlords. Prosperous burghers also owned estates. The final incorporation of the Cossack landed families into the Russian nobility with all of its rights and privileges occurred in 1785.

4.1 ANDREI KURBSKII'S SORCERY ALLEGATIONS AGAINST HIS WIFE, MARIA IUREVNA GOLSHANSKAIA, IN DIVORCE PROCEEDINGS (1578)

Source: Nikolai Ivanishev, *Zhizn' Andreia Mikhailovicha Kurbskago v Litve i na Volyni: Akty, izdannye vremennoiu kommissieiu, Vysochaishe*

uchrezhdennoiu pri Kievskom voennom, podol'skom i volynskom general-gubernator (Kyiv: V lito-tip. zavedenii i K. Val'nera, 1849), 1:95–98.

We have already met Prince Andrei Kurbskii in the documents in 2.9, after he had switched his allegiance in 1564 from Tsar Ivan IV to King Sigismund Augustus of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. From a safe location outside of Muscovy, he proceeded to criticize in writing Ivan's tyranny, his excessive brutality, and his sinfulness. As you may remember, Kurbskii viewed the machinations of sorcerer-advisers to be at the heart of the evil he described emanating from the Kremlin. Ivan IV, in turn, had accused Kurbskii of also consulting with godless sorcerers and enchanters and hiring them to do his evil deeds. This dark worldview of magic and malevolence was not confined to the realm of politics but pervaded all aspects of life, especially those involving intimate relationships.

In the first of two documents, we encounter Kurbskii in 1578 at the start of what would become a protracted and messy divorce. When Prince Kurbskii decided to become a renegade émigré, he abandoned his elderly mother, wife, and nine-year-old son in Muscovy. The spouse and child died in prison within the year. Seven years later in 1571, Kurbskii married Maria Iurevna Kozinskaia (née Golshanskaia or Olshanskaia). For simplicity's sake we will refer to Maria throughout as Golshanskaia.

Golshanskaia was quite a catch for the ambitious Kurbskii, as the Golshanskiis were an old and eminent family in Lithuania with ties to the king. Besides bringing to the marriage an influential aristocratic lineage and networks, she also brought considerable properties.[6] After her first husband, Montolt, died, Golshanskaia married the prominent Mikhail Tishkovich Kozinski, chatelain of Lutsk. On the death of each of her first two husbands, she received a significant portion of his property as Lithuanian contractual practices prescribed. In exchange for a dower or marriage portion that included two big estates, Golshanskaia signed over to Kurbskii almost all of her significant lands.

In 1576, Princess Golshanskaia drew up a testament that confirmed these property arrangements with Kurbskii at the expense of her two sons from her marriage to Montolt. However, Golshanskaia soon began to reconsider her decision to give Kurbskii control of so many of her lands and dispatched the documents relating to her family's ownership of the Dubrovitsa estate to her son Ian.

In response to Golshanskaia's bold action, Kurbskii launched a complaint, which is reflected in the first document, that she had stolen various important papers from a trunk and handed them over to her sons. Moreover, in looking for the documents, Kurbskii found suspicious items that smacked of witchcraft. Kurbskii's charge of witchcraft against his wife added a nefarious element to Golshanskaia's attempt to regain control over her family estate.

Hostilities between the spouses stretched on for another six years, both in and out of court. We cannot include all the documents here, but we will summarize highpoints of the intervening years. Kurbskii accused Golshanskaia's son Andrei of assaulting people on one of his properties and committing arson there in retaliation for the charges that

Kurbskii had lodged against his mother. According to Kurbskii, Andrei had also confronted him on the roads and endangered his life. Such actions and accusations were not out of the ordinary in a rough-and-tumble countryside in which nobles attacked and plundered each other when they were not fighting on the battlefield. In fact, Kurbskii himself became known for "flaunt[ing] the privileges granted to him by the Polish king, harass[ing]" peasants and Jews, "display[ing] disdain for local institutions," and being sued repeatedly.[7]

In the meantime, Golshanskaia's other son, Ian, complained about Kurbskii's ill treatment of his mother in a local court, and then took the matter to the king's court in Warsaw. Evidently Kurbskii, on suspecting his wife of foul play, had locked her up in Kowel Castle.[8]

In the summer of 1578, the Kurbskiis decided to resolve their marital discord before a court of friends and peers in Lvov (Lviv). During the negotiations the charge of witchcraft against Golshanskaia was dropped. The estranged spouses agreed to a property settlement and sought an annulment of their marriage. The annulment did not end matters between them, however, as Golshanskaia continued to make complaints against Kurbskii. Things came to a head when Kurbskii remarried in 1579. Although the prince had obtained permission from a bishop to remarry, Orthodox canon law stipulated that Kurbskii could not do so as long as his previous wife was still alive. Golshanskaia protested the marriage's illegality, wishing to deprive any offspring from inheriting her properties.

In response Kurbskii had a 1577 eyewitness report, the second document provided below, registered in the magistrate's books. It detailed his former wife's extramarital affair, which he hoped would be sufficient grounds to give canonical weight to the annulment. In this context, the accusation of witchcraft resurfaced. An Orthodox metropolitan's ruling (the metropolitan being the highest-ranked ecclesiastical official within the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth) underscored the illegality of both the annulment and Kurbskii's subsequent marriage. According to the nineteenth-century historian Nikolai Ivanishev, the Polish king eventually ruled in the case, but his decision is unknown. Kurbskii's 1583 testament, nevertheless, noted that the estranged couple had finally come to a peaceful settlement.[9]

Given the high social status of the plaintiffs in the case, torture was never applied to either Prince Kurbskii or Princess Golshanskaia. Interestingly, Princess Golshanskaia's reputation did not seem to suffer from the recurrent accusations of witchcraft.

The bailiff's report of June 9, 1578, on his investigation into the theft of items from Prince Kurbskii's storeroom that had been carried out according to Princess Kurbskaia's orders

Mr. Zhdan Chirskii of the bailiff's district of Vladimir appeared before me, Vasilii Pavlovich, Vladimir's royal deputy, in the Lord of Vladimir's castle and gave the following report for the town records:

In response to Your Honor's police order, I was summoned by His Highness Prince Andrei Mikhailovich Kurbskii of Iaroslavl to His Honor's Kowel Castle. I went there to investigate the theft of items from the storeroom of His Honor Kirilo Zubtsovskii, the bailiff of Kowel Castle. And I saw in the storeroom a broken side window that had been closed with a grate and fastened with iron bars, as well as two trunks with broken locks. One of the trunks belonged to Zubtsovskii and the other to Sir Kiril Nevzorov. And Zubtsovskii, Prince Kurbskii's bailiff at Kowel Castle, informed me that at midnight on May 4, when Sunday turned into Monday, the window had been broken by thieves and the iron bars torn off; and that a number of significant items—gold and silver—belonging to him and his friend Nevzorov had been taken from the trunks, the locks of which had been broken off. That theft was committed by none other than Rainka, the serving girl belonging to Her Highness Princess Kurbskaia, and Rainka's brother Matvei, the policeman of Nevzorov's village Dolnosko, who after stealing from his lord ran away. And they showed me tracks, which we measured and found to match Rainka's footwear. The thief had exited the storeroom by means of a ladder located on the wooden gallery inside the ramparts. From the gallery he had crossed three buttresses to get to the turret on the gates, where Prince Kurbskii's treasury is located. The thief went higher, enlarged the small old hole in the drawbridge opening with his knife, and found his way into the treasury. From the drawbridge you can see the broken shingle on the roof of the turret that had covered the opening.

And on June 5, 1578, Rainka informed me, without any coercion on my part, of the following: "Her Highness, the Princess, ordered my brother Matvei and me to break the storeroom window and to tear off the iron bars, during which time she stood on the porch. My brother had stolen into the castle through the gate already near midday on Sunday, when the prince had ridden to Dubrovitsa/Dubrovytsa. On orders of Her Highness, he hid there and lay in the anteroom next to Sir Zubtsovskii's storeroom until nightfall, when the princess let him in. Afterward, she went to the monastery, making it look as though she wanted to pray to God. At night my brother slid down the hole and broke the locks off the trunks. The princess had ordered him to look for documents pertaining to the ownership of Dubrovitsa and Kowel, saying, 'although Iatsko told me that all of those documents had been sent to the estate of Milianovichi, I did not believe it; search Zubtsovskii's storeroom for those documents and take whatever money you find.' And having received the documents, Her Highness wanted to flee the castle with us. Even earlier, Her Highness had sent several documents pertaining to Dubrovitsa's ownership to her son, Sir Ian Montolt, by way of Zhdan Mironovich, Prince Kurbskii's scribe. On top of that, Her Highness had sent letters to her other son, Andrei Montolt, via the Verbskii Monastery's hegumen Simeon and also via some disabled beggars, asking Andrei to ride to the castle under cover, and to rescue and carry her off in whatever manner possible, even if it were out in the open. And in the previous year of 1577, Prince Kurbskii, our lord, had found a small pouch with sand, hair, and other charms in Her Highness's trunk. An old woman living in Pavlovichi on property belonging to Princess Lokachka had given her all of these items. But they are not poisonous, but only concoctions to make the prince love the princess. And now Her

Highness is trying hard to see the old woman so that she could acquire a type of herb that she could use not for the purpose of love but for something else."

And members of the gentry, Their Honors Bogdan Volynets and Fedor Kniazskii, his royal highness's lord, were with me. I ordered the bailiff's testimony to be written down in the town records.

Six years later: July 20, 1581, testimony of Lord Timofei Zyk of Kniazho (in Lutsk District) concerning the adultery of Princess Maria Iurevna Kurbskaia, née Golshanskaia

In the town hall, before us, the town officials of Vladimir—Fedor Kurtsevich, representing the royal deputy, and Lazar Ivanitskii, serving as judge—the landowner from Lutsk District, Sir Timofei Zyk of Kniazho, testified and confessed the following, which is to be recorded in the town records:

On June 19, 1577, I visited His Highness Prince Andrei Kurbskii at the estate of Milianovichi and found him to be ill. Here, with the information and guidance provided by the prince's servant boy Ivan Semenovich Laskovich Chernitskii, I and this Ivan witnessed Zhdan Mirinovich, the servant of Kurbskii's wife, Princess Maria Iurevna Kurbskaia, lying on the bed with Princess Kurbskaia and committing an abomination. I have described this in detail in a document that I previously handed over to Prince Kurbskii." He gave us that document for registering in the records, saying, "although I have been ready prior to this time to inform the urban authorities about all this, Prince Kurbskii did not demand that I do so because he did not want to besmirch the reputation of his previous wife, the princess. Now His Highness needs evidence to support this matter.

And Zyk asked that his oral testimony, which accorded with the written document and which he had presented to the town administration, be recorded in the books and that Prince Kurbskii be given a copy. In response to his wish, we ordered that both his oral testimony and the document be recorded in the town books. The document reads as follows:

In this document I, Zyk Timofei of Kniazho, landowner in the royal district of Lutsk, am informing whoever needs to know this that I not long ago, on June 19 of this year of 1577, having heard about His Highness Prince Kurbskii's illness and wishing to see him, arrived at Milianovichi, where His Highness lay ill and was being ministered to. Several of Prince Kurbskii's servants, lamenting the prince's ill health, complained about His Highness's wife,

Princess Maria Iurevna Kurbskaia. They considered her to be the cause of the prince's illness. They talked about the great power of her witchcraft and hostility toward her husband. On the morning of the second day, when it was already fairly light, Kurbskii's servant boy Ivan Semenovich Laskovich Chernitskii approached me and quietly said: "Master of Kniazho! I cannot trust the prince's servants, but since there are only a few of them in the palace and they are still sleeping, I'll show your Highness how our princess leads a dissolute life by sleeping with her servant Zhdan. Come and see." And he led me to the storeroom adjacent to the princess's bedroom, which had an entrance from the front room, and showed me a chink in the wall. We both looked through it and could see without any doubt whatsoever the servant Zhdan Mironovich lying on the bed with his mistress Princess Kurbskaia and fornicating with her. Probably having heard us, he leaped out of bed and ran to a small storeroom. Seeing Prince Kurbskii so ill at that time, I did not want to tell him what I had seen and to broadcast it. But when the Lord God granted the prince better health, I, as a friend, told him everything in secret; and as His Highness directed that I put my evidence in writing, I wrote everything that I had heard and witnessed in this document and gave that document to His Highness Prince Kurbskii, sealed and with my signature.

Written in Tulichovo, in the year 1577 since the birth of Christ, in the month of September, on the fifth day. Signed by Timofei Zyk of Kniazho in his own hand.

4.2 FALSE ACCUSATION OF WITCHCRAFT AGAINST SIEMIONOWA PAUCIUTINA, A COSSACK WOMAN (1634)

Source: TsDIAK, f. 1471 (Oster), op. 1, spr. 1 (1626–69), ark. 76 zv.–77. Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa. We are grateful to Dysa for also sharing her transciption of the document with us.

This unsettling case comes from a Zaporozhian Cossack settlement in the Palatinate of Kyiv, located southeast of the city of Kyiv at a point near the confluence of the Desna and Oster Rivers, which in 1634 was a part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. It introduces readers to town justice in the typically terse fashion of Polish court records of the seventeenth century. Despite its brevity, the report conveys an atmosphere rife with suspicions of witchcraft in which officials almost carry out illegal justice before a superior officer is able to bring the situation under control. The case predates Hetman

Briukhovetskii's vigilante burning of witches in 1666 by almost three decades (see Document 2.12). The Cossack woman Siemionowa Pauciutina/Semenova Pautsiutina, who comes under suspicion of being a witch for no good reason, clearly knows her legal rights. Interesting gender dynamics are at play here. Note that the accusation is made against her after Pauciutina takes the initiative to go to a municipal council meeting composed exclusively of men to present some issue or complaint, the nature of which we do not know. Once she is charged with witchcraft and threatened, she voices her right to appeal to the king's authorities in the castle. The king's representatives advise Pauciutina further about her legal rights as a woman: only her husband could bring a suit against her tormentors in her name.

The grievance of Siemionowa Pauciutina, a Cossack's wife from Oster, on September 20, 1634

Siemionowa Pauciutina, the wife of a Cossack of His Majesty's Zaporozhian army, who lived in this very town of Oster, stood before me, Michał Struzczynski. Sobbing, she complained about Nester Zopol, the strong-willed head of the Oster magistrate and his assistants who accompanied him: Jacko Koszyn/Iatsko Koshyn, Deszko Sanczenko/Deshko Sanchenko, Ilia Zomiksenko, Micko Romanczenko/Mitsko Romanchenko, Petlenko, Skitier, Opanas Szapicko's/Shapytsko's son-in-law, Maxim Szulak/Maksym Chulak, Sidor Lemiesz/Lemesh, and others, who all told numbered several dozens. They had gathered for a council meeting in the house belonging to the townsman Jacko Mołczan/Iatsko Molchan. And when the complainant came to the meeting house to pursue a matter of concern to her, the head of the magistrate and his assistants, for some reason, seized her and threatened to tie her up, telling her: "You are a witch. You came here to bewitch us and to place a spell on our journey, because we are about to start our trip to see His Majesty." They threatened and clearly wanted to burn her at the stake. They gathered a lot of wood and straw as she protested and asked them to take her to the authorities in the castle, where she would be treated justly. The head of the magistrate and the others shouted in reply: "We do not need to take you to the castle. We can judge you here ourselves and we will burn you." At that moment, the Cossacks' *ataman* Żmaiło Dziewicky/Zhmailo Dzevytskyi, who was in Oster at that time, had learned about the incident. He rushed to the meeting house and barely made it in time to defend the woman with oral arguments and to save her. They ordered her to swear before a holy icon that she had not planned to do any

harm to them and that the thought had not even crossed her mind. She had no choice but to comply.

At the Castle

Sobbing, she repeated her complaint. She provided testimony against the above-mentioned persons about the slander her soul and body had suffered and preserved her right to litigate the case in court after God returns her husband safely home from the military expedition and his service to His Royal Majesty. She asked that her complaint and account be written down in the castle records of Oster. They were so written.

4.3 SWIMMING OF WITCHES IN PODILLIA (1711)

Source: V. Antonovych, *Koldovstvo: Dokumenty, protsessy, izsledovanie* (St. Petersburg: Tip. V. Kirshbauma, 1877), 59, no. 15 (from the Records of the Dubno magistrate, no. 1381, 1703–12). Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa.

Although there were references to the swimming of witches in ancient Rus (see Document 1.3), there are no extant written records of the extralegal practice taking place in Ukraine until its revival in the early eighteenth century in Ukrainian-populated drought-prone areas of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, where this example occurred. Extralegal practices did not leave a paper trial unless a complaint was registered with the authorities or officials stumbled on an incident or suspected foul play. Thus we cannot definitely say whether the swimming of witches occurred in the intervening centuries between the medieval and late early modern periods. Dunking did constitute a known pretrial and semiformal procedure in the Polish, Lithuanian, and Latvian regions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and it clearly occurred in regions of imperial Russia in the early eighteenth century, given the Senate's and Holy Synod's condemnation of the practice in 1721 (see the documents in 3.15). All instances of the ordeal by water were illegal. According to Michael Ostling, an expert on Polish witchcraft, "dunking was repeatedly and emphatically condemned by the [Polish] higher courts as a practice."[10] The official in the case below, however, was not disturbed by the use of a testing technique that directly violated the law. Thus, even in areas more governed by Western

legal systems, the application of the law could be dependent on individual whims and local circumstances.

Sometimes women accused of witchcraft requested that they be subjected to the water ordeal as a way of proving their innocence and restoring their reputations. In Ukrainian areas, a variation of dunking involved having suspected witches carry pails of water from a pond or river, which they then poured over a religious marker at a crossroads near their respective villages, supposedly to encourage rain. Villagers interpreted any spillage along the way as a sure sign that a woman was indeed a witch and responsible for the drought.[11]

In the year 1711, a drought occurred in this locality for several weeks or so, and the parched soil did not promise a lot of hope for the hardworking farmers. And His Highness Sir Teodor Kownacki/Kovnatskyi issued a command in accordance with the ancient custom that when women are suspected of witchcraft, they are to be swum in water to see which one will float. All of the women of the village Pohorilec/Pohorilets were subjected to the ordeal by water: Krawczyk's/Kravchuk's wife; Jaroszyk's/Iaroshuk's wife; Myszcz's/Myshch's wife Marloczyka/Marlochyka; Kowaleniatyk's/Kovaleniatiuk's wife; Lubicka/Lubytska; Jurczyk's/Iurchyk's wife; Marijchyk's wife; Burgaczyk's/Burgachuk's wife; Hawrylik's/ Havryliuk's wife, who was a lady at court; and Susich's/Susykh's wife Nikonowa/Nikonova. Then they were taken under guard to Dubno Castle. The husbands were told to take custody of their wives for the time being, but they were to be prepared to bring them back to court upon notice. The case was recorded on May 29 of the above-mentioned year.

4.4 WITCHCRAFT AND INFANTICIDE (1753)

Source: Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych w Warszawie (The Central Archives of Historical Records in Warsaw), Księga Czarna Krzemienieckie 1747–77, folios 119–29 (1753). Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa. We are grateful to Dysa for also sharing her transcription of the trial record with us.

The investigation and prosecution of Iewka Stanorycha/Evka Stanorykha for infanticide and witchcraft allows us to see into the specifics of magical and religious beliefs and practices of the complex, multiconfessional society of this border region under Polish-Lithuanian rule. It uncovers a set of ideas about witchcraft that incorporated some of the tropes circulating in the Catholic world, ideas about witches' flight and perhaps about witches' Sabbaths, tropes rarely seen farther east in the Orthodox world. The influences of Roman Catholicism and its demonology are evident in the Ukrainian areas in part as a result of the 1595 imposition of the Uniate Church, which allowed for Orthodox ritual but required obeisance to the Roman pope. As time went on, Catholic influences became stronger as literacy increased. This case also exposes the harsh exactions of Magdeburg Law, revealing a sinister aspect that can come as a surprising discovery in a form of law often touted for its respect of the rights of urban citizens. Here we see both the court's commitment to a full investigation and its willingness to use cruel torture to elicit the "truth" it had already predetermined.

The multiethnic and multiconfessional town of Zasław/Iziaslav, where this case takes place, was located in the deep southern part of the Palatinate of Podolia/Podillia, which belonged to the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth at this time; it was not too far from the border between the commonwealth and Moldavia. Zasław was situated about nine miles from the city of Krzemieniec/Kremenets, a regional center. Needing to interview as many people as possible in this ongoing investigation involving witchcraft and infanticide, the officials traveled from Krzemieniec to Zasław and conducted their investigation there.

Geography or, more precisely, geographic imagination plays a significant role in the case because the defendants repeatedly emphasized that witches and their craft sprang not from local sources but rather from a hazily defined "Ukraine" (*Ukraina*, meaning a borderland area), which they insistently located outside of their own Palatinate of Podillia. They referred, for instance, to the village of Szwaykowky/Shvaikivka in "Ukraina" where witchcraft was allegedly widely practiced. This village was located on the western border of the Palatinate of Kyiv and the Palatinate of Volhynia (just north of the border of Palatinate of Bratslav). Testimony from this case suggests that the borderland figured in the local imagination not only as a locus of witchery but more generally as a place of freedom or license, where the normal rules of respectability were loosened. Perhaps because of the anonymity it offered, it drew people like the defendant here who testified that "Lesko also tried to make me leave my husband and to run away with him to Ukraine."

By the mid-seventeenth century, the shifting boundaries of "Ukraina" had become associated with the freebooting Cossack polity that had developed in the three eastern palatinates of Kyiv, Bratslav, and Chernihiv. By the 1667 Truce of Andrusovo these territories were divided along the Dnieper/Dnipro River into Right-Bank Ukraine (lands west of the river), which was under Polish rule, and Left-Bank Ukraine (lands to the east of the river) and the city of Kyiv, which were under Russian rule but enjoyed autonomous status. It is interesting that even though the Polish government had severely restricted the Cossacks' autonomy in the Right Bank, the participants in this case of witchcraft continued to imagine the Right Bank, which was to the east of their village, as a place of greater freedoms. After 1667, Cossacks on both sides of the river began to refer to all the former

territories of the Hetmanate as Ukraine. As demonstrated in this mid-eighteenth-century case, these villagers had embraced that understanding. Because their village had not been part of the Hetmanate, they viewed Ukraine as another region altogether.

From the perspective of witchcraft, the village of Szwaykowky, where witches ostensibly offered their services, constituted a liminal space. It is not coincidental that crossroads and transitional zones at the edges of villages were perceived as liminal spaces as well. These were places where evil could linger and a battle between good and evil could take place. In seventeenth-century Polish Catholic polemical literature, witches' orgies featuring the devil and his demons allegedly occurred there, and sometimes more specifically atop the folklorish Bald Mountain, the location of which varied according to author and witness. Descriptions of such orgies were nevertheless absent from early modern Polish and Ukrainian witch trials.[12] Fittingly, the alleged witch in this case confesses, even if only with the application of torture, to having learned to fly at the border between what had been the older but short-lived Cossack polity and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

The liminality of a border was not limited to associations with witchcraft practices. In the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, a village or town border also served as the location of the public burning of a witch. The punishment took place at the end of the road, and a witch's ashes were scattered to symbolize her complete banishment from society.[13]

Readers may be puzzled as to why the magistrates did not pursue further investigation of the women whom the professed witch Oryszka/Oryshka identified as fellow witches. According to Magdeburg Law, at least two or three reliable witnesses to malefic magical practices were necessary for cases of witchcraft to proceed. Those witnesses did not materialize in this case. In the end, the magistrates did not view Oryszka to be a credible witness because of her constantly changing and what they termed her "nonsensical" testimony, and the accused women denied any knowledge of witchcraft. Consequently, the judges had no choice but to let them go. We should note too that a number of Jews testified in this case. Magdeburg Law permitted Jews to testify if there were at least two Christian witnesses and a second Jewish witness as well, but local circumstances often led to modifications of these provisions.[14] In this case, the Jews' accounts were taken seriously, unlike those of the accused, and the collected testimony highlights a society in which Jews and Christians interacted routinely in their daily lives.

The linkages between infanticide and witchcraft in this case points to the interrelationship of issues of fertility, healing, and bewitchment. Unexpected pregnancies, whether considered legitimate or not, constituted a perennial problem in early modern societies. All over Europe, healers, midwives, and alleged witches/healers developed recipes and potions for abortifacients made from plants with poisonous properties such as hellebore, rue, and Queen Anne's lace. Spells whispered over the potions were believed to increase the concoctions' potency.

Investigation in the town of Old Zasław, February 8, 1753

We, the authorities of the city of Krzemieniec: Mayor Ian Pawłowicz, official Michał Jurkiewicz, councilors Bazyli Bozkiewicz/Vasyl Bozhkevych, and Stefan Sieczkowski/ Stepan Sechkovskyi together with Feodor Rozdolski/Fedir Rozdolskyi, who at that time was a scribe of the town hall of Krzemieniec, went to the town of Zasław to adjudicate the following criminal case. We summoned the mayor, Bazyli Sielecki/Vasyl Seletskyi, and residents of Old Zasław Kitył Doroszenko/Doroshenko, Hryhory Zacenko/Hryhoryi Zatsenko, and Iwan Słutka/Ivan Slutka, and the mayor, Filip Kanenko, and residents of New Zasław Stefan Semenowicz/Stepan Semenovych and Paweł/Pavlo Mospaniu before us to listen to the ongoing investigation involving the accused Iewka Stanorycha and her mother Maruszka Tymczycha/Marushka Tymchykha. According to the investigation conducted in New Zasław, they had committed a godless and terrible crime. Even so, our Magdeburg court summoned community members of the village of Little Szczurowczyky/Shchurovychki before us in order to understand the case better. They came before us and said:

1. Iwan Petrowicz/Ivan Petrovych testified: "The accused Iewdokia [a.k.a. Iewka] had committed a godless crime, when she gave birth to a baby in his pigpen. She left it in the manure among the pigs and went off to the tavern. When my children saw the baby, they informed me about it. So I headed down to the pigpen and saw that the pigs had already devoured the baby's breast and little neck. I ran off to the administrator to tell him about it. After we thought about it, we decided that no one else could have committed this godless crime except for the accused Iewka Stanorycha. We went to the tavern, tied her up, and handed her over to the estate authorities. She came with us and publicly and freely confessed (*i.e., without torture*) that she was responsible but added that the baby was stillborn. To rid herself of her shame, she had left it in the pigpen.

2. The Jew Szander Kiezmanowicz, a tenant of the village Szczurowczyky, testified that the accused's mother had stayed at his tavern. When people saw the pregnant Iewka, they bluntly told her: "You are not just fat, you must be pregnant." Humiliated, she cursed them. Then her mother joined in and said: "My daughter, you must be pregnant, because most people suspect you are." Not accepting any criticism, Iewka began to swear at her mother and the other accusers. And she went on swearing and cursing.

3. Community members of the village of Little Szczurowczyky testified that they had seen a baby in the pigpen belonging to the honorable Iwan Petrowicz. "And we, community members, saw that the pigs had devoured the baby's breast and little neck. The baby was obviously born on

time, but we don't know if it was born alive or dead. She, Iewka, must testify about this in front of the court and your honors."

Our Magdeburg court ordered the accused Iewka to come before us. She testified:

I was born in the village of Podlisiec/Pidlistsi. My relative Tymko Merharowko's/ Merharovko's daughter and my mother arranged my marriage to Tymko Tymarczuk/Tymarchuk of Podlisiec. I lived with him for six years and we had two children, who died there. After six years, my husband left me. I had fallen in love with a young man in Podlisiec named Lesko Romanczuk/Romanchuk. For two years I allowed him to commit a terrible crime. That Lesko also tried to make me leave my husband and run away with him to Ukraine. I did not want to, but for two years I had intimate relations with him in the village.

My husband left me because he caught me having sex with Lesko Romanczuk several times, but he still kept on coming back for me. However, I did not want to go with him because I loved Lesko more than my husband.

We then conceived the baby I gave birth to in Szczurowczyky. I had felt it stir within me during the holiday of the Transfiguration (*on August 6*). I realized then that I was pregnant and had been with child for a while by then, because I had initially felt something at the beginning of the Assumption fast (*from August 1 to 15*). Then I left Podlisiec for Szczurowczyky, where I stayed three weeks. People insulted me there, saying, 'You are pregnant.' I protected myself and hid my shame. When the baby's time came, I took my things from the Jewish tavern and went to Iwan Petrowicz's pigpen. When I got there, the pigs were elsewhere. I quickly gave birth to a dead baby, and after having held it in my arms, I left it there covered up and went back to the tavern.

A Jew entered the tavern and announced that they had found in Iwan Petrowicz's pigpen a dead baby, whose breast and little neck had been devoured by the pigs. I confessed that it was my baby, and when community members arrived at the tavern, they took me to the estate authorities.

After hearing the free confession of the accused Iewka Stanorycha, our court ordered the accused's mother, Maruszka, to appear before us. She testified: "My daughter went to the village Szczurowczyky, where she stayed three weeks. She did not admit to committing any evil deeds. When I tried asking her several times if she was pregnant, she answered rudely. It was only after she had given birth and the baby was discovered that she confessed everything to me, saying that she had [conceived] the baby with Lesko Romanczuk. But she said that the baby was stillborn. And I do not know any other bad things about her or myself."

Having thus listened to the testimonies of both sides, our Magdeburg court of Krzemeniec found the information to be wanting. That is why we postponed the next hearing until Monday—February 12 at six o'clock.

On February 12, both sides appeared before the court. The community members of the village Szczurowczyky repeated their initial testimonies. However, the accused stood and said:

> I poisoned that baby with the encouragement of a girl named Oryszka Liczmanicha/ Lychmanykha, after I had confessed everything to her. She responded: 'I will give you a potion and you will lose that baby.' She gave me the potion in Podlisiec on the holiday of Most Holy Mary according to the Greek rite. But I did not drink it until (*the pre-Christmas*) St. Philip's fast. And on the third day, almost as soon as I had taken it, I lost the baby. Having given birth to a stillborn baby, I buried it in the manure among the pigs. It was found only on the second day after I did this and its breast and little neck had been devoured by the pigs.

Our Magdeburg court has heard today's confession of the accused Iewka Tymarczuczka. Because she did not tell our court what we wanted in her first testimony, and this time it came out that she was encouraged by the girl Oryszka Liczmanicha, who gave her a potion to poison a baby, our Magdeburg court wants additional information. That is why we are sending her to be tortured: according to the law and statutes, our hangman should thrice stretch her on the rack and simultaneously burn her hands with candles. This will help us come to a better decision concerning the case involving the community of Little Szczurowczyky.

When she was being sent out to be tortured, the accused Iewka did not admit to anything new. She only said that she "had committed that crime because Oryszka Liczmanicha had given me a potion with which to poison the baby." The court took that into consideration. Since she had confessed this freely without torture, and the plaintiff—the community of the village of Szczurowczyky—could not be tortured, we summoned Oryszka Liczmanicha to appear before us on February 14 to testify without torture. We also wanted her to look into Iewka's eyes and for Iewka to look into hers, so that they would confess to committing that godless crime.

The accused Oryszka Liczmanicha confessed without torture:

I am very familiar with that potion; it's called Philip's potion. You won't find it around here, it's from Ukraine and it's good for all kinds of evil undertakings. If a pregnant woman drinks it, she'll lose the baby immediately. That potion is also good for those women whose husbands left them and who want them back. In this case you should heat the potion over a fire and say the following: "Cook, cook, help me" and then a voice from the potion will ask: "What do you want?" and you should answer at once. I learned this from people from Ukraine, nearby Berdyczew, in the village of Szwaykowky. They showed me this potion, which is good for all kinds of evil things and acts. So I am very well familiar with it and know how it works. I made Iewka Stanorycha lose her baby. And she also asked me to give her some potion that would make her husband die.

So our Magdeburg court heard the torture-free interrogation of Oryszka Liczmanicha. Since she voluntarily confessed to committing all those deeds and to the fact that she knew all of the evil acts but did not admit that she incited others to commit evil deeds, she had to look directly in Iewka's eyes and claim that Iewka had asked her for a potion to kill her husband. And the accused Iewka did not accept that accusation.

Our court sent the accused Oryszka Liczmanicha to be tortured in order to obtain more precise information. She was to be stretched on a rack by the hangman, and she was to hold a burning candle in each hand. The hangman was ordered to burn her with those candles. For the purpose of a fuller record, she was asked the names of people for whom she used her witchcraft; who asked her about it; who taught her.

Confession of the accused Oryszka Liczmanicha (under torture)

(1) She said that she had obtained the potion that she gave to Iewka for the evil deeds from a man called Ilaszuk/Ilashuk.

(2) She did not answer one of the questions above.

(3) She confessed that "Iewka Stanorycha did not ask me to give her a potion to make her husband die; she asked only for a potion to get rid of a baby. I know many things. There are four like me in the village of Duńkowcy/Dunkovtsi. The first is named Onyszczycha Tkaczycha/Onyshchykha Tkachykha, the second—Nastia Dzierycha/Dzherykha, the third—Handzia Hurkowska/Hurkovska, the fourth—Zawadska/Zavadska. They take milk from cows, send down rain and hailstorms, and know how to do many other evil things, which they taught me. I went with them to the border a couple of times. We did the following: on the first

Thursday of each month, we gathered together at Zawadska's place. (She ordered me to fly, giving me a birch cane with bast fiber [*lyko*] attached to it and telling me to mount it. And so I flew after them, but I did not know how to fly very well. I fell off that 'horse' at the border and hurt my nose and back.) I stayed with the Ukrainian witches near Berdyczew in Szwaykowky on the Kiev [Palatinate] border. I remember well the first and second names of those four witches who showed me everything."

(A summary of Iewka Stanorycha's crime follows. The community members of the village of Szczurowczyky swore an oath that it was Iewka Stanorycha whose dead baby they had found in the pigpen, and that they themselves had seen the dead baby.)

Verdicts (including additional testimonies)

Our Magdeburg court, taking into consideration the oath, and having learned the essence of what had happened, ordered: for the sake of public justice, the accused Iewka Stanorycha must be beheaded with the sword by the hangman on the grounds that she fed her own baby to pigs. In fact, according to the law, the correct punishment for such a crime would be to shred her breasts with red-hot pincers and then bury her alive and pierce her with a stake. But our court decided to be merciful, because such a punishment can be upsetting and unsettling to people [in the community]. Thus we dispatched the accused to be beheaded by the sword.

Concerning the accused's mother, Maruszka Tymczycha: Although we did not discover any evidence that she had committed evil deeds, we decided that she was guilty and thus ordered her to lie prostrate during mass in a Catholic or Uniate (*Orthodox rite*) church on any holiday on five separate occasions. This is her punishment for not teaching her daughter properly and for allowing her to commit adultery.

As for the accused Oryszka Liczmanicha, the court decided to summon and await the appearance of Onyszczycha Tkaczycha, Nastia Dzierycha, Handzia Hurkowska, and Elźbita/Ielyzavyta Zawadska, who dabbled in witchcraft and other unworthy things. They were ordered to appear before us on the fifteenth day [of February].

On February 15, the accused Elźbita Zawadska and Motra Onyszczycha Tkaczycha came before the Magdeburg court. None of them confessed to

anything. During the interrogation free of torture Motra Tkaczycha said: “I know nothing about witchcraft. And I do not know that girl Oryszka. I saw her only once, when she came to me to ask for some fire.” Elźbita Zawadska said the following words: “I also don’t know anything about evil deeds, and I was accused for no reason. But I have heard from individuals, in particular Roman Tkacz/Tkach, who reported to his honor Master Niepokalczycki/Nepokalchyskyi that Handzia Hurkowska had collected dew after the holiday of the Intercession of Our Most Holy Lady of the Veil, and then that dew turned into milk. But I do not know how to do anything like that, and I do not know any evil things.”

When the accused Oryszka Liczmanicha stood before them and looked them directly in the eyes, she said, “You are witches.” But our court still does not have any confirmation of that accusation to proceed. In this case, where on one side Elźbita Zawadska and Motra Tkaczycha have been denounced before the Magdeburg court by Oryszka Liczmanicha, who in turn had been denounced by Iewka, on the other side, our court heard free confessions as well as ones extracted by torture. We discovered that Oryszka had given the accused Iewka some potion to drink to get rid of an unborn child. And today she confessed that they both drank that potion to prevent pregnancies altogether. Also today she said, staring into the eyes of the accused Elźbita Zawadska and Motra Tkaczycha, that they were witches. And those accused and summoned here did not accept the charge and did not admit to knowing evil things.

Our court took all these things into consideration. Since the accused Oryszka Liczmanicha had been summoned before the court several times, and each time she gave a different account and uttered nonsense, we order that she be sent to the same square as was Iewka Stanorycha, where she is to be punished with corporal punishment, that is with fifty strokes of the whip by our hangman Antoni/Anton Kądrutskyi. That punishment will be repeated every three months for a total of four times, so in total she will receive two hundred strokes.

We do not have any confirmation of the evil acts of the accused and summoned Elźbita Zawadska and Motra Tkaczycha, which means that we

cannot verify the information. But since our court is trying to deter witchcraft and inhibit witches, we order: if in future the accused Elźbita Zawadska and Motra Tkaczycha, as well as Handzia Hurkowska and Oryszka Liczmanicha or any of their descendants are proven to have used any witchcraft or sorcery, whether in a few years or in decades to come, they will be burned alive as prescribed by Magdeburg Law.

B. MUSCOVY AND IMPERIAL RUSSIA

Muscovy

Muscovite law observed no distinction between judicial and administrative process. Judges who presided in the tsars' courts throughout the land usually did double duty as town governors, provincial officials, or regimental commanders, with policing and punishment functions thrown in. High- and even middle-ranking officials were appointed by the central chancelleries in Moscow in the name of the tsar and usually served relatively short stints before being transferred to other postings. At the lowest levels, some local officials were selected from within their communities and served alongside those dispatched from the center.

Suits were normally initiated from below, by plaintiffs with a grievance against another person. Local officials would hear their suits, write up a report, and then, upon receiving the go-ahead from Moscow, would launch an investigation. They would question the plaintiff and the defendant and, if their testimony diverged, place them face to face for what was called an "eye-to-eye confrontation," where they would have to defend their positions or retract their earlier statements. If the charges were serious enough, the Moscow officials would authorize the use of torture, often of both parties. If more people were implicated during the course of interrogation and torture, they too would be brought in for questioning and perhaps for torture. Witnesses and material evidence were also considered in resolving the cases. In serious cases, the trial was often relocated from the provinces to Moscow,

but regardless of the venue, the central authorities decided on the appropriate sentences, which would be promptly carried out.

The trial records that follow document the fate of the prisoners during their trials. They also reveal standard Muscovite practice. The central chancelleries in Moscow and some of the provincial administrative offices had actual prisons in which suspects could be held. When transferred from a provincial governor's jurisdiction to Moscow, suspects were usually detained in the dungeons of the Military Chancellery. In one of the cases that follows (see Document 4.5), a woman testified that she served time at a "women's monastery," as convents were called in Muscovite parlance. More commonly, however, prisoners were remitted "under guard" to particular individuals, either low-level officials or military servitors or simply local residents, who would hold them under close watch in their own homes and would be held responsible if their charges escaped.

The tsar and the chancelleries in Moscow closely supervised the workings of lesser courts, requiring that they be informed of each twist and turn of any major case and that no action be taken in such matters without direct orders from the Kremlin. In her important study of the Muscovite legal system, Nancy Shields Kollmann finds that the central chancelleries encouraged local officials to resolve minor cases on their own initiative, but despite this invitation, the habit of referring all questions back to Moscow remained common practice. Presumably many provincial administrators were afraid to make a move that might bring down the tsar's ire.[15] Reports grew impossibly long, weighted down with repetitive documentation. A report might run as follows:

> On June 3, 1652, the Tula musketeer Ivan Andreev filed a petition addressed to you, O sovereign, and to me in the governor's office in Tula, and in it he said: … (*Here would be a recap of the petitioner's complaint.*) So I wrote to you, O sovereign, saying that on June 3, 1652, the Tula musketeer Ivan Andreev filed a petition addressed to you, O sovereign, and to me in the governor's office in Tula, and in it he said: … (*Here would follow another word for word recap of the petitioner's complaint.*) And you, O sovereign, wrote to me, and told me to investigate. (*And so on.*)

This makes for tedious reading, to say the least. It underscores the extent to which authority was centralized in Moscow—not an unexpected finding—but at the same time, it exposes the extent to which the tsar's government involved itself in the affairs of its far-flung population, at least from the seventeenth century on.

Further emphasizing the distinctive premises of Muscovite judicial practice, we turn to the formal procedures of litigation. Plaintiffs filed suits not in the dispassionate language of a legal brief but rather in the form of humble petitions, setting out the pathos of their situations and imploring the tsar, personally, for mercy. Although by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the machinery of the tsardom was vast and had far exceeded the abilities of the tsar to oversee all of its business, petitioners addressed their ruler directly in a format gauged to evoke his pious and divinely inspired mercy. Petitioners, and indeed all members of the realm from the highest to the lowest, bowed literally and figuratively before the tsar in their supplicatory petitions, called *chelobitnye*, literally meaning "beating the forehead to the ground" documents. In their petitions, subjects used demeaning diminutive forms of their names: Andriushka (Little Andy) instead of Andrei, or Nastka (Little Nat) instead of Natalia. They identified themselves by rank and region (provincial landholder from Shuia, poor landless widowed peasant from Vologda), and they called on the tsar's duty to protect them by employing descriptors of their status within the realm that emphasized their weakness and dependency. Members of the highest elite circles enjoyed the right to call themselves "slaves" (*kholopy*) of the tsar, while commoners employed a different term for slave (*rab/raba*) or described themselves as "your orphans" (*siroty*). Churchmen used the term *bogomolets*, literally "one who prays to God," to emphasize the service they did by engaging God on the side of the realm. While the tsarist regime was deeply invested in the work of prescriptive law, as seen in its efforts to produce massive codified statute books, personalized appeal and the standards of mercy continued to operate alongside legal abstraction and regularized application of the law.

People of all ranks used the language of humility and self-abasement in addressing the tsar, but the condition of human bondage was more than a figure of speech. In the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, Muscovy was a slave-holding society. This changed only under Peter the Great in 1723, when slavery was abolished (although other forms of forced and coerced labor, of course, persisted). Muscovites enslaved captives taken in military campaigns but also, more unusually, held each other in slavery. Slaves generally served in the households of their masters, creating a tense domestic intimacy that could produce witchcraft allegations. But slaves also served in the military, as estate bailiffs, and in other nonagricultural roles. The mass of agrarian labor was performed not by slaves but by peasants and, from the mid-seventeenth century on, by serfs. Prior to that time, peasants had been bound by contractual obligations to their landlords and required to labor on their landlords' estates, turn over a fraction of their production, and pay fees in return for the privilege of living on the land and working for their own subsistence. Gradually, peasants' freedom of movement was eroded by successive laws that limited the times when they could leave and required that they pay extra dues and fees to their landlords before departing. The *Ulozhenie* law code of 1649 bound them in perpetuity to their landlords and to the land on which they were registered. This is generally considered the beginning of legal serfdom in Russia. Peasants continued to move in spite of the new regulations, but their status had fundamentally altered. Nonetheless, both peasants and slaves actively engaged with the legal system and appear in the cases that follow not only as suspects but also as accusers and witnesses. Given the clear power differential, peasants rarely brought suits against their own masters; however, the trial records demonstrate that sometimes they did so and, on occasion, against all odds, they won.

In the witchcraft trials themselves, Muscovite judges asked a prescribed set of questions that dwelled on the issues of physical harm and betrayed concern for preventing the spread of magical criminality. The questions are very similar to those we have seen in use in Polish-Lithuanian courtrooms: "Who taught you? Whom have you taught? Whom have you harmed or

bewitched? What other magical skills or knowledge do you have?" They rarely expressed any interest in spiritual matters, although judges might ask for the names of the suspects' confessors or when they had last taken communion. Conspicuously absent in the trial transcripts are leading questions that we might look for in European investigations, questions prying into relations with the devil or probing sexual conduct.

Muscovy has a reputation for draconian punishment, and it did indeed exact cruel sentences, but not out of line with those administered by its early modern counterparts. In many cases, the archives do not preserve documentation of the resolution of the cases or the sentences prescribed, but enough have survived to give a sense of the kinds of punishments inflicted and the frequency with which various sentences were assigned. Most commonly employed both as an instrument of interrogative torture and as a form of punishment was the knout. This was a fearsome form of a whip, sometimes with multiple strands, with tips hardened in flames and said to be sharp as steel. Beatings and other corporal punishments were carried out in places of public gathering so that the lessons would be made perfectly clear to a wide audience. Those convicted of witchcraft might be sentenced to multiple blows with the knout or the birch, and have other punishments added on. Among the most theatrical was the sentence of having the papers carrying the incriminating spells set afire on their bare backs so they were burned into their flesh. About 40 percent of those convicted of witchcraft were exiled for life to Siberia or to the militarized Ukrainian frontiers, where manpower was constantly in short supply. There, if they were men, they were registered as agricultural laborers or as military servicemen in the tsar's forces. Approximately the same number of witchcraft convicts were released back into the community but kept under close surveillance with their neighbors vouching for their good conduct. Somewhere around 15 percent of those convicted were sentenced to death. Most executions were carried out by the sword. Female convicts, as discussed elsewhere, were buried in the earth up to their chests and left to die. Death by burning was reserved for the most heinous criminals and was not the standard form of execution even for witches. Only a few dozen

convicted witches suffered this fate in Muscovy. Even this ritual form of execution was practiced differently in Russia. Convicts were not burned at the stake as in the West but were enclosed in a cage stuffed with tar and straw and burned alive.

Process in the imperial period

Peter the Great entered the scene with high hopes for a complete overhaul of the social and legal systems. Wishing to harness all labor to the advancement of the state and his ambitious empire-building efforts, he increased the oppression of serfs, who were required to serve not only their masters but also the state in providing the army with military conscripts for life and paying a new poll or head tax that fell on every adult male. Peter abolished slavery in 1723, but his goal was not emancipatory; rather, he shifted former slaves into the intensifying bondage of serfdom, apparently in order to end their tax-free status and augment the tax and service rolls. Household serfs took over the domestic functions of former slaves, and serfs could serve as their masters' bailiffs. Serfdom spread under Peter and his immediate successors as they regularly awarded gifts of land, which included the peasants who worked that land, to their noble servitors. Those peasants who remained on state lands and those who farmed lands belonging to the crown also had to provide regular military service to the state and pay the poll tax.

On the legal front, Peter was far less successful in his ambitious reforms. Couching his efforts in the language of what the historian Marc Raeff labels "the well-ordered police state," Peter attempted to codify the welter of laws and decrees that had cluttered up legal directives since the *Ulozhenie* of 1649.[16] He labored to streamline and rationalize hierarchies of legal authority, to separate administrative from judicial functions, to crack down on corruption, and to improve record-keeping practices. Of these admirable goals, Kollmann writes, only the final one met with lasting success. Record keeping decidedly improved, with a mandated shift from the long scrolls of Muscovy to a more modern and accessible book format. But on each of the other scores, the reforms either never took place or quickly withered. "Early eighteenth-century judicial reforms made few significant changes in judicial

procedure and did not systematize the positive law…. In courts with constantly changing names and spheres of competence, judges persisted in rendering justice in patterns essentially the same as before."[17]

In the early eighteenth century, witchcraft cases continued to be heard in an assortment of venues. Some were heard in ecclesiastical courts or in the Holy Synod. Of those adjudicated in secular courts, most were heard in the Preobrazhenskii Chancellery, a court body established in the 1680s and commissioned in 1696 to hear all political crimes, or in the Secret Chancellery, a special investigative branch also responsible for political crimes—that is, crimes of treason or lese majesty. In her study of witchcraft and magical practices in the eighteenth century, Elena B. Smilianskaia lists twenty-six cases heard at the Preobrazhenskii Chancellery between 1701 and 1725, and forty-four heard at the Secret Chancellery between 1736 and 1763.[18] These organs served directly under the sovereign, as the ruler's personal chancellery for political cases. A 1743 ruling clarified the relationship between the Secret Chancellery and the other important institutions of state: no information was to be passed to the Senate, Synod, or any other agency unless the empress explicitly approved it in writing.[19]

While reforms of the underlying principles of the law may have changed little despite Peter's efforts, some procedures changed quite a bit in the early decades of the century. A 1723 decree altered the interrogation practices of Muscovite courts. It dictated that the court secretary should question the parties according to an established set of "points" and then should write up the case and present it in written form to the judge. Some procedures remained unchanged. Notably, torture continued to play a critical role in eliciting testimony and testimony taken under torture was considered the gold standard of reliability. This was the case until 1763, when Catherine II tried to restrict its use in her courts. The local police nonetheless still applied beatings in interrogations into the early nineteenth century.

Under Catherine, the court system underwent a major overhaul, as did the approach to the prosecution of witchcraft. As already noted in the discussion of laws, Catherine created a new set of lower courts throughout the realm in conjunction with a far-reaching reform of local governance.

Her 1775 Statute on Provincial Administration created thirty-five provinces (which were expanded to fifty in 1791), each with its separate administration, and set up not only the courts of equity but also an elaborate structure of new courts at both the district and provincial levels. In so doing, Catherine decentralized the judicial and police systems, devolving responsibility from state bureaucrats onto provincial noblemen and, to a lesser extent, members of other nonserf elements of provincial society.

Courts of equity were charged with sentencing in witchcraft cases and were instructed to mitigate sentences in cases that came to them from other courts. They were thus far from the sole site of witchcraft investigation and prosecution. Due to the extreme complexity of these reforms and the overlapping purview of the courts, the following remarks will focus briefly on those judicial institutions that most often dealt with witchcraft. Cases involving accusations of witchcraft against serfs may have been handled sub rosa in manorial courts or by village communities off the books, leaving no archival traces, but if legal process was observed, they were supposed to be investigated first by the local police in the district land court and then referred to the court of equity for (merciful) sentencing. If murder was suspected in a witchcraft case, a preliminary investigation might have gone to a provincial criminal court before ultimately winding up in the court of equity.

The institution of first instance, the district land court, was also a product of the 1775 reform. Each district land court was headed by a police officer (*ispravnik*) and two or three assessors elected from among the nobility, usually retired military officers. In areas with large populations of state peasants—that is, obligated peasants who belonged to the state rather than to an individual landlord—these peasants could also cast votes for the assessors; there was no stipulation, however, that these assessors had to be peasants. None of these people had any legal training. Serfs had no right to representation, were subject to their landowners' judicial authority, and were, in principle, prohibited from denouncing their masters, unless high treason was involved. Granting nobles various privileges was the price that

Catherine was willing to pay in exchange for their playing a new, significant role in administering the countryside.

Though called a "court," the land court was not equivalent to an English court of law but rather constituted a local police organ. The police were in charge of delivering summons, collecting evidence in cases that were reported to it, detaining suspects, and questioning witnesses under oath. The investigators did allow plaintiffs and defendants to face each other and repeat their testimonies in order to elicit further information that either defended their positions or made them change their testimony on some points. They also sought information from parish priests about the plaintiffs' and defendants' religious conduct, whether they attended services regularly and carried out the law's requirement that they go to communion and confession annually.

Furthermore, the land court carried out decisions from other courts and had a host of other responsibilities. There still was no distinction between police, investigative, administrative, and judicial functions. There were no open trials and no possibility for legal representation at this or any other level. Adversarial proceedings to challenge a police indictment did not exist at the local level but could be initiated at a higher level if the petitioner was able to convince a higher court to hear the case, whether through appeal or bribery. The investigators sought the community's and often surrounding communities' judgments about the defendants' characters, which could be damning if villagers harbored grudges against them. Laws passed in 1760 and 1765 gave serfowners and village communities the right to exile peasants to Siberia without having to go through any trial process at all. Despite Catherine's reforming efforts, the system was, to say the least, arbitrary.[20]

For these reasons, the provincial courts of equity were intended to fill important functions, to provide a way for communities to seek limited redress against professed or suspected sorcerers without excessively harsh punitive consequences and to teach communities that witchcraft and sorcery were stuff and nonsense. The courts were to be guided by a love of

humanity, to be "merciful" in their verdicts, and to rule by application of "conscience."[21]

Each court of equity was headed by a nobleman, who once again was usually a retired army officer but of a fairly high rank. He was appointed by the governor-general and advised by two elected representatives or assessors from each of three separate social estates (nobles, townspeople, and state peasants), depending on the nature of the case. Even at this level, legal knowledge was not a prerequisite for being either a judge or an elected representative. In practice, this meant the literate clerks who drew up the documentation and had some knowledge of the law enjoyed a great deal of leeway and authority.

Not all provinces had a court of equity, and in those areas, provincial criminal courts took up the task of hearing witchcraft cases. Even in provinces with functioning courts of equity, these institutions were not courts of first instance in criminal cases. They were dependent on other courts, such as the lower land courts described above, district courts, and provincial criminal courts, which ruled according to older eighteenth-century laws, to send cases of witchcraft to them for more humane sentencing. The judge and assessors in each court of equity reviewed written materials from other courts (all the while the poor defendants in the cases were kept under arrest in ghastly prisons in the provincial towns) and revised or determined the sentences, sometimes taking into account all the time that the defendants had spent locked up. In practice the court could seek additional information from the locale in which the crime occurred and from the detained defendant. The written records included reports from the police investigators on the ground—which, unfortunately for historians, stripped the oral testimonies of plaintiffs, defendants, and witnesses of their colloquial flavor—and reports from experts. In essence, they prepared formulaic summaries of the information, which were key pieces of shorthand that could sway adjudicators in other courts. After Russia's laws were codified in 1832 and new laws were drafted, all sentences were based on the new law codes.

4.5 THE TRIAL OF THE OLD PEASANT WOMAN BABA DARITSA AND OTHERS (1647)

Sources: Our translation is based on the archival manuscript (RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stolb. 564, ll. 154–234; part of that archival text is reproduced in Iu. Kozlov, ed., " 'I toiu de vorozhboiu ona, Daritsa, vorozhila mnogoe vremia …' (odin iz moskovskikh koldovskikh protsessov XVII v.)," in Problemy istorii Rossii, vol. 2: *Opyt gosudarstvennogo stroitel'stva XV-XX vv.* (Ekaterinburg: Volot, 1998), ll. 210–29. The published excerpt is available online at http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Russ/XVII/1640-1660/Lamanova_D/sysknoe_delo_1647.htm.

The 1647 trial of a diviner or fortune-teller/witch named Daritsa offers extraordinary insights into many aspects of magical belief and practice in the seventeenth century. Through the extensive testimonial record, we can see a number of practitioners working their skills in specialized fields: one telling fortunes by interpreting visions in salt; another casting bones to read their portents; each denying knowledge of the other's area of expertise. Healing techniques appear here as common property: the accused confess to working cures, but so do several other members of the peasant community. Judging from the ways the accused frame their testimony in order to protect themselves, the key difference between benign and suspect healing practices seems to have been whether or not spells were involved. Healing with substances alone rather than with "whisperings" made the enterprise far less criminal. The testimony provided here shows that magical expertise passed from one adept to another in various ways: from mother to daughter, priest to parishioner, or simply through life experience and a sense of what had proved efficacious in the past. It also shows us a kind of professionalism among magical practitioners: they not only specialized and drew devoted customers over their decades of hard work, but they also collected money for their services.

The principal actors in the suit were peasants, mostly residents of land owned and controlled by the sovereign (called court villages) or by monastic institutions, but some were under the control of secular noble masters. Baba Daritsa, in her fifty-some-year career, served her neighbors in the village of Gavrilovskaia in Suzdal Province and peasants of nearby communities, but notably, she also provided consultations for people of lofty rank in their Moscow homes and on their provincial estates. When investigators tried to track her down for arrest and interrogation, they finally located her at the home of one of these elite patrons. Each client she named was hauled in for questioning during the course of the trial. The differential sentences meted out to people of various social

rankings provide a snapshot of the cruel hierarchies of inequality inherent to the Muscovite social order.

This case presents an unusually complete record of Muscovite legal process. Baba Daritsa's name drew attention accidentally when Simonko Tarasov, a monastic peasant in her village, complained to the local authorities that his neighbor Ermolka Lazorev had stolen property from him. He explained how he knew Ermolka to be the culprit: he had consulted with a certain Baba Daritsa, a local diviner, who had identified the thief through her fortune-telling devices. This incidental remark drew the ire of officials in Moscow, and the cascade of accusations flowed from there.

The initial petition from Simonko Tarasov has not survived; we know of it only from recapitulations in the later records. Every subsequent piece of the investigation, trial, sentencing, and punishment seems to have been preserved in this file, giving a clear sense of the stages of judicial inquiry, the back-and-forth between Moscow and the provinces, and the kinds of evidence considered definitive in Muscovite courts. The investigation, trial, and sentencing stretched out over almost six months, June through December 1647, and involved multiple levels of officialdom, from peasant bailiffs to the central Moscow chancelleries, to the boyars and princes of the Duma Council, and even to the tsar himself. As the case passed from one jurisdiction to another, the various sites of authority and the complex relations among them come into view. The following account was compiled by clerks of the Military Chancellery, and includes most if not all of the relevant documents exchanged and accumulated during the conduct of the case.

Although the investigation concerned peasants, the 1647 trial began in the Chancellery of the Great Court, the institution that usually heard cases involving members of the tsar's court. It was heard in this elevated venue because Gavrilovskaia settlement was located on grounds owned by the sovereign himself. At a later stage, the case passed to the jurisdiction of the Military Chancellery, the bureau often entrusted with adjudicating sorcery cases. Finally, probably because of the high-ranking people who had engaged Daritsa's services, the matter passed to the investigative committee of the Boyar Council, the most elite judicial body in the realm.

This long case rewards careful reading. It spells out each step along the way. It demonstrates how suspects were confronted with their accusers, and how witnesses and accusers could be swept into the violence of the "justice system." It shows the power of leading questions and the ways that the state and its agents pursued matters of interest to them, such as stifling the spread of magical knowledge by tracking down networks of communication. The questions do not reflect interest in the matters of concern to European demonologists of the era, such as pacts with the devil. The authorities' disapproval cannot be characterized as strictly secular, though, with their condemnation of "guilt before God and the sovereign." The confessions of the elite witnesses also reflect an understanding that resorting to divination and magical healing was displeasing to God and that sticking to prayer was a spiritually safer route.

The documentation here tracks the central government's deliberate authorization of the use of torture. It shows the way witnesses were first simply questioned, then questioned in the torture chamber, with the visual threat of torture as an incentive to speak, and then during brutal applications of torture. The documents reveal that the

boyars themselves, the most distinguished nobles of the land, descended into the torture chamber to attend dismal interrogation sessions. They even shed light on a tiny moment of hesitation on the part of the torturers, when faced with the prospect of administering blows of the knout, that traditional Russian hardened whip, to the eighty- or ninety-year-old Daritsa. Alongside verbal testimony, material evidence also enters the courtroom. The case record includes reports on the roots and grasses seized from the suspects' homes and shows the authorities' efforts to consult experts to determine what these substances were and whether or not they were dangerous.

The material in this lengthy document speaks for itself. Here we would like to highlight just a few unusual features of the case. First, the record itself reveals the many different kinds of courts that might be involved in trying an accused witch and the kinds of punitive approaches that might be taken. Baba Daritsa herself testified that she had been sentenced almost ten years earlier by another tsarist official and sent to a female monastic institution for incarceration and spiritual rehabilitation. This time, as a recidivist, she would not be so lucky. In keeping with the soon-to-be issued decrees against witchcraft and sorcery, she would be burned alive.

The aged Daritsa was a garrulous witness. She and her interlocutors painted a lively picture of life and of magic in the first half of the seventeenth century. If the story did not end so tragically, it would make for entertaining reading.

We have followed the published excerpt from the archival manuscript, which includes pages (*listy*) 210–29 of the original. Where the archival manuscript adds substantive elements, we have incorporated them at the relevant junctures enclosed in curly brackets and in italics with the relevant page numbers from the manuscript indicated. Our editorial comments within the manuscripts continue to be italicized within parentheses.

The Military Chancellery's report from the investigation of the fortune-teller (*vorozheia*) Daritsa, a peasant woman of the village of Volodiatino, Gavrilovskaia settlement, Suzdal Province

In June of the year 1647, the authorities of the New Savior Monastery sent to the Chancellery of the Great Court a denunciatory petition from the peasant Simonko Tarasov of the monastery's estate of the village Orudevo, and in Simonko Tarasov's denunciation it is written: in 1647, some of his property was stolen from the storage room. He, Simonko, as well as the peasants Lazarko Loginov and Dokuchaika Davydov of the same village Orudevo, went to the old fortune-teller/witch (*vorozheika*) Baba Daritsa in order for her to divine who stole his, Simonko's, property. And that old witch (*baba*) divined and told him that his neighbor, whose wife ran off and whose features she identified, had stolen it from him. According to that old witch's findings and according to what her fortune-telling indicated, [they

figured out] that the neighbor [she meant] was Ermolka Lazorev. And he, Simonko, petitioned the authorities against Ermolka Lazorev in the matter of that theft, and the authorities subsequently sent Simonko, along with his petition, to the Chancellery of the Great Court.

And according to the sovereign's decree, an official was dispatched from the court to the village of Volodiatino in Suzdal Province [to apprehend] the fortune-teller Daritsa, but he didn't find that old woman in the village of Volodiatino, because Roman Akinfeev had brought her to his manor in Moscow to tell fortunes. And that old woman was apprehended in Moscow at Roman Akinfeev's manor.

And Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia ordered that the matter be investigated by the boyar Ivan Vasilevich Morozov, Prince Petr Ivanovich Pronskii, high court noble (*okol'nichii*) Boris Ivanovich Pushkin, the state secretaries Nazarii Chistyi and Dmitrii Volosheninov.[22]

Questioning of the fortune-teller Daritsa without torture

And on June 30, Boyar Ivan Vasilevich Morozov and his colleagues interrogated the fortune-teller Baba Daritsa of the village of Volodiatino, Gavrilovskaia settlement, Suzdal Province: how long had she, Daritsa, told fortunes, and using what techniques? And how had she learned fortune-telling, and who had taught her? And had other people, either men and women, told fortunes with her using the same fortune-telling techniques or other forms of divining, and what were their names? And (*one word illegible*) had Daritsa taught anyone else to tell fortunes, and before this, had she divined for anyone and had she treated any type of illnesses, and in which Moscow homes of boyars, high court nobles, and duma people had she been, and for whom else had she told fortunes and concerning what questions? And Baba Daritsa said in the questioning that she predicts by examining salt and that she tells fortunes for all kinds of people for whatever they need. And as to how she came to tell fortunes, she started about fifty years ago in the following way: at a time when she was ill and weak, she had a vision in church. [In the vision,] an old man came to her and told her that she should divine for all types of people who needed it. And after that, that

same old man and a woman, both shaggy-haired, appeared to her, as if coming out of water, and she acknowledges that this happened to her as a result of a diabolic vision. And she discovers the answers because when she looks at the salt, little men appear to her in the salt: one laughs, and another cries. And if she is to divine about a theft, the answers appear to her in the salt: the man runs around hunched over, indicating with signs who stole what, and another one chases after him. And whether someone is going to live or die, she sees that too in the salt, and whatever someone needs to know appears to her.

And with that method of prediction, she, Daritsa, has divined for a long time and told fortunes for anyone who wanted it. And people called her to Moscow, and she wandered around going to villages and hamlets; and many provincial people came to her in Volodiatino for fortune-telling, and she told them their fortunes. And when she fell into poverty, a lot of people came to her because of this [fortune-telling ability], and people summoned her to Moscow with the knowledge of the Gavrilovskaia bailiffs, and the bailiffs knew about her {*l. 180: Elsewhere Daritsa adds: "everyone knew."*} But no other women or men worked in this fortune-telling along with her, and she didn't teach anyone that kind of divination. At present she has no children, but in her younger years she had children: a year-and-a-half-old son and a two-week-old daughter, but they died young.

And when Tsar Boris Fedorovich was in the tsar's council (*probably meaning when he served as regent for Tsar Fedor I, r. 1584–98*), a court nobleman (*dvorianin*) named Mikifor was sent to her, but she doesn't remember whose son he was or his nickname. And that court nobleman wanted to know the future: would Boris Fedorovich become tsar? And she foretold that Boris Fedorovich would become tsar for a short time. And for that she was put under guard by the secretary, the clerk named Tomil, but she doesn't remember whose son he was or his nickname, but he had an eye ailment. And when Boris Fedorovich did become tsar, he freed her. And during the reign of the Apostate Monk (*a derogatory name for the First False Dmitrii, r. 1605–6*), she was at Prince Vasilii Golitsyn's place, but she can't remember whose son he was. At that time his wife was ill, and he,

Prince Vasilii, gave her, Daritsa, some honey in a small dish, and she made predictions over that dish right then and there.

{ll. 182–83: (An earlier section of the report includes this additional testimony against high-ranking Moscow people:) And she, Daritsa, was in Moscow at the home of Vasilii Zhukov's nephew, Ivan Zhukov. And Ivan was very sick and their peasant Demka Danilov came for her and she looked at Ivan and told his fortune. And that peasant Demka's horses went missing. And she divined for him and told him he should search for those horses in the woods, and they wouldn't be lost. So he, Demka, found those horses in the woods.}

The hamlets belonging to Boyar Prince Iakov Kudenetovich Cherkaskii were close to the village of Volodiatino, but she, Daritsa, never went to the boyar's home, and although his servants were sometimes at her place, they never informed on her. The village belonging to boyar Prince Iakov Kudenetovich is about ten versts from the village of Volodiatino.

She was at Temkin's, but she doesn't know who this Temkin is. His mother-in-law sent someone to the village of Volodiatino to get her, Daritsa, and bring her to their estate. At that time the household serf Eremei Munin was serving as their bailiff. And Temkin's mother-in-law told her that [her son-in-law] Temkin, the husband of her daughter Maria, doesn't love her daughter, and she asked her to remedy this (*with a love charm*). But she, Daritsa, doesn't know how to do this; she only knows how to look at salt and tell fortunes.

She also went to the home of Prince Boris Troekurov, attendant of the royal table (s*tol'nik*), at a time when he was still unmarried and he lay sick, barely alive, having been thrown from his horse, and she examined him. {*l. 169: And from that wound they said he would die, and she predicted that he would not die of that illness, but she doesn't remember how many years ago that was.*}

Testimony of Prince Boris Troekurov

Prince Boris Troekurov said, more than seventeen years ago, he was sick and had been close to death and lay unconscious for about nine weeks. When he had recovered a bit from that illness, his aunt Irina, Ivan Basmanov's wife, told him that she had sent for a woman to examine him to see if he, Prince Boris, would live. But he could not identify that woman because he lay unconscious at the time. He was young then, unmarried, and had no official rank.

Continuation of Daritsa's testimony

She, Daritsa, was at Princess Marina's, the wife of Prince Mikhailo Kozlovskii, when her husband Prince Mikhailo was ill, and she had sent for Daritsa to predict whether her husband would live. But when she, Daritsa, arrived at the princess's place, her husband was already dead.

Testimony of Princess Marina, Prince Mikhailo Kozlovskii's wife

And by order of the sovereign, the state secretary Mikhailo Volosheninov was dispatched to question Princess Marina, the wife of Prince Mikhailo Kozlovskii. Under questioning she related how her husband had been ill and that doctors (*dokhtury*) had treated his illness but had not given him any relief whatsoever.[23] But about four years earlier, two years before his death, they learned that some woman from Volodiatino treats illnesses. And that woman came to their place and told Prince Mikhailo that he should pray to God and that she did not have the ability to heal him. He did not have her to tell his fortune, and she, Princess Marina, cautioned her husband and did not encourage him to have his fortune told or that anything be divined. Her husband died in Kursk seven years ago, and after that she, Daritsa, was never at their place for any reason.

Continuation of Daritsa's testimony

Under interrogation that same woman Daritsa said that she was at Prince Savelei Kozlovskii's wife's home, where she stirred water in a pitcher [to see the future] that same year.

Testimony of Prince Savelei Kozlovskii's wife, Vasilisa

By order of the sovereign, the state secretary Mikhailo Volosheninov was dispatched to question Prince Savelei Kozlovskii's wife, Princess Vasilisa, and with questioning she related how her husband, Prince Savelei, had been in Moscow, and she had been ill, close to death, this winter after the new year, and that they had heard about this woman from their own people (*i.e., serfs*) and that she might be helpful in combatting illness. And they brought that woman to them, and that woman examined some salt at their place but could not divine anything. And she stirred water in a pitcher, but no help came from that. A German apothecary named Ondrei healed her, and since then that woman was never at their place.

Continuation of Daritsa's testimony

That same woman said that two years ago a princess called Tateva came to her in Volodiatino from her estates Klinishche and Nedorovskoe for fortune-telling, and a young prince, whose name she doesn't know, was with her. That princess was ill at the time and could not use her hands. And she examined her and told her that she would regain her health.

And she was in the household of the boyar Prince Boris Oleksandrovich Repnin attending to one of his wife's ill servant women, and she examined her heart, but she can't remember how long ago this was or the woman's name. She went to Prince Vasilii Iansheev's too, when his hand had been severed. And she examined the salt to see what misery was in store for him and after having made the divination told him that the wound on his arm was mortal.

She predicted that Fedor Tolochanov would not be in the sovereign's favor for long and that he would be exiled.

And recently she was at Roman Akinfeev and his son-in-law's because Roman's wife and small children and his son-in-law Dmitrii Koltovskoi are seriously ill, and she examined them.

Testimony of Dmitrii Koltovskoi and his confrontation with Roman Akinfeev

Dmitrii Koltovskoi was questioned and in questioning said that Roman Akinfeev sent this woman Daritsa to him and that that woman examined him and grabbed him by the stomach, saying that the fever was internal, but he didn't have her tell his fortune.

{ll. 190–92: But he didn't ask her to make a prediction for him, and she didn't give him roots or drinks. In this he is sinful before God and guilty before the sovereign: that he let her probe his chest (lit., heart) to figure out why he was sick, because he was sick and lay without memory. But he didn't have her do any fortune-telling and he doesn't remember anything. And before that he never went to that baba or any other fortune-tellers. And even then he didn't go to her.

And they brought him, Dmitrii, to the boyars, sick and swollen.

(In a face-to-face confrontation between Roman and Dmitrii:) Roman said he sent that baba to Dmitrii because he wanted to help out because of their bond of kinship, because Dmitrii is the brother-in-law of his own sister. He acted in agreement with his sister and with Dmitrii's wife, having seen his great misery since at the time he fell mortally ill. But Dmitrii said he doesn't know whether Roman spoke with him about that baba and told him to send for her, because he was ill.

*And on July 6 Roman's punishment for his guilt was carried out by sovereign order: He was beaten with a knout multiple times and his sentence was announced to him. State Secretary Mikhailo Volosheninov of the Military Chancellery told him: "In this year 1647, in June, you, Roman Akinfeev, sent your man Pronka from Moscow to Suzdal Province to the village of Volodiatino for that Baba Daritsa and your man brought her to you. And that baba-witch (*koldun'ia*) told fortunes at your house, and at the house of your brother-in-law Dmitrii Koltovskoi she told fortunes and worked witchcraft (*vorozhila zh i koldovala*). And for this you have brought upon yourself a death sentence."*

But Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, had mercy and ordered the death sentence not to be carried out. And the boyars agreed. They ordered you for such God-denying conduct to be beaten with a knout in the market squares.

And after the punishment Roman Akinfeev was released.}

Instruction from Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and the boyars' response

{*l. 175:*

*From Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich to the boyars who listened to the testimony taken under torture and under interrogation. They are ordered to question the baba about who plotted such criminal acts with her, be they other babas or men (*muzhiki*), and find out who they went to, what boyars or people of court ranks or other ranks of people and their wives called them for the telling of fortunes. And we sent an order to the attendant Prince Boris Troekurov and told him to come to Moscow right away to the boyars in court. And the boyars should inform Roman Akinfeev of his guilt and order him beaten with a knout [many times] in a row to teach him never again to have witches (*kolduni*) at his home, and then he should be released.*

And send to us a report about whatever Baba Daritsa says in questioning.

Written in Kolomenskoe village on July 3, 1639.

(*In the next document (ll. 176–78), the boyars acknowledged receipt of the tsar's orders, repeating them back verbatim to show that they had read and understood them:) And regarding Roman Akinfeev, by your order we had his punishment for his guilt carried out. He was beaten with a knout in the marketplaces and released. And that baba and Roman Akinfeev's man Pronka Cherntsov and the New Savior Monastery peasant [Simonko Tarasov] were given under guard for protection pending your sovereign order.*}

Verdict regarding Roman Akinfeev

And by order of the sovereign, Roman Akinfeev for his guilt in this matter, punishment was to be carried out: have him beaten with the knout in the marketplaces.

Continuation of Daritsa's testimony

Daritsa said that she was summoned to Prince Fedor Tatev's wife when she was ill, and she predicted that she would soon die, but she can't remember in what year [this occurred].

She was also at Afanasii Akinfeev's when his legs were afflicted, and she stayed at his place two nights, and she examined him and predicted that as a result of that affliction he would soon die. It must have been ten years ago when she was there. Daritsa also said that she was at Fedor Fefilatev's. At that time his wife was ill, and she examined her, but she can't remember in what year.

*{l. 169: And she was at the home of the high-ranking merchant (*gost'*) Grigorii Nikitnikov that year or so, and Grigorii made her tell a fortune about whether his son Andrei would marry again and once having married, how many years would he live, and she predicted and said that his son Andrei would marry another wife and would live with her for not a long time, and when he married, then on the third day he would die.}*

{l. 170: And she went to many people in cities and in Moscow to tell fortunes but she doesn't remember any of their names because she is old and she can't see.}

{ll. 172–73: And Baba Daritsa said that she told fortunes for people and they gave her a coin or two for that. She used those coins to carry through on a vow: she bought an icon with some of the money, and she contributed money for a bell in the village of Volodiatino in the Church of the Archangel Michael with two peasants from the village, Fedka and Vlasko Mekhotskii, and herself as the third.}

Testimony of Ilia Loshakov

And Ilia Loshakov said he was the bailiff of Gavrilovskaia settlement about twenty years ago. And upon his arrival, a peasant woman came to his mother with bread (*a welcoming gift that usually also included salt*), and that Daritsa asked his mother for something to put in her eyes. At that time his mother had problems with her own eyes and she put ginger with soap in her eyes, and she gave that woman some of that soap with ginger and told her to put it in her eyes. {*l. 170: When he arrived in Gavrilovskaia about*

twenty years earlier, the peasants greeted him with bread and their wives came to his mother and at that time that Baba Daritsa was with them and came with a pie. (He also testified that he himself put soap and ginger in her eyes for her, rather than that his mother did so.)}

When he first arrived, he, Ilia, did not know that Baba Daritsa told fortunes, but he soon learned about her at a meeting with the other people in his office, about the fact that she told fortunes. And after he found out, that baba never came to his mother's and his home, and he did not summon her or go to her, or send her to anyone in Moscow; he doesn't know who came to that woman from near or far for fortune-telling.

Continuation of Daritsa's testimony

Under questioning Daritsa said that she was at State Secretary Grigorei Nechaev's when he was on his estate in Iurevo, and he had lost a book, the name of which she, Daritsa, doesn't know, only that he, Grigorei, was very upset about losing it. At that time Prokofei Nosov was in charge of the local chancellery office.

And she predicted for Grigorei that the book was in the very same household in the hands of a Tatar, but she can't remember if it was his son or nephew. And for that act of divining, Secretary Gregorei Nechaev exiled her to Beloozero to the women's monastery in Gory. She was in that monastery for about a year.

Testimony of Prokofei Nosov

And Prokofei Nosov said that he had been bailiff in Gavrilovskaia settlement starting in 1639/40 for a half of a third of a year,[24] and learned from the peasants that the woman Daritsa told fortunes in the village of Volodiatino, that she read salt for anyone who came to her and that she traveled to Moscow, but he doesn't know who she visited in Moscow. And he, Prokofei, did not give her permission to travel to Moscow, and no one wrote to him about her or sent for her, and she never came to him for any reason. He, Prokofei, had been sent an official document from the sovereign from the Chancellery of the Great Court under the seal of State Secretary Grigorii

Nechaev, ordering him to find that baba and hold her in custody until the sovereign's order arrived. And having found her, he held her in custody a long time. The baba was ill, and he wrote to the sovereign that she had been found and was ill, but no order from the sovereign about this was sent to him. And shortly thereafter, Mikita Protasev was sent to Gavrilovskaia settlement to take his place as bailiff, and after his, Prokofei's, departure, the officer Ivashko Fomin was sent to Mikita Protasev with the sovereign's decree concerning this baba. He doesn't know the nature of the sovereign's order or where Ivashka took that woman, because he had already left his post and this occurred after he had left.

Testimony of Officer Ivashko Fomin

And Officer Ivashko Fomin said that in 1641 at the time of (*the pre-Christmas*) St. Philip's fast, he was sent from the Chancellery of the Great Court to the local chancellery official Mikita Protasev in Gavrilovskaia with an order from the sovereign, and according to the sovereign's order, he was to take Baba Daritsa from the local bailiff Mikita Protasev and take her under guard to Beloozero, to Gory, to the women's Monastery of the Resurrection. And he, Ivashko, took her and handed her over to the abbess, and took a receipt from her, which he then handed in at the Chancellery of the Great Court. And he doesn't know for what crime that Baba Daritsa was sent to Beloozero under his guard or by what order from the sovereign she was released and taken from Beloozero, or who came to get her.

Inquiry of the Chancellery of the Great Court regarding Daritsa's previous crime [on August 2]

And to discover the truth, a memo was sent from the Chancellery of the Great Court: for what crime was that Baba Daritsa exiled to Beloozero, to the women's Monastery of the Resurrection, and what order from the sovereign had authorized her release from detention at that monastery?

August 9 memo from the Chancellery of the Great Court to the Chancellery of Criminal Investigations to Boyar Ivan Vasilevich Morozov and his comrades

And in the chancellery's memo it was written: on October 18 in the past year of 1641, the bailiff Mikita Protasev of the sovereign's property, Gavrilovskaia settlement in Suzdal Province, wrote to Great Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia of blessed memory, saying: in the previous year 1638/39, according to the sovereign's decree Prokofei Nosov was ordered to send the widow fortune-teller Daritsa to Moscow. That widow fortune-teller Daritsa had been under Prokofei Nosov's guard for a long time, and being chained, she became weak and was released from the chains. And in the year 1641/42, Mikita discovered that a lot of people were coming from near and far to see the fortune-teller Daritsa for information. And consequently, he, Mikita, brought her before him for questioning, and Daritsa did not deny her guilt for fortune-telling. And by the sovereign's order and according to Mikita's written statement, the fortune-teller Daritsa was dispatched under guard to the women's monastery in Gory at Beloozero, where the guard was ordered to turn her over to the authority of the good and true elder nun and to keep her in strict monastic humility, so that no one would come to her and she would not be able to speak any words of sorcery to anyone and not cause anyone harm. She was always to maintain fasts and prayers, and she was ordered to go to the church of God all the time for the services. It was ordered that she not be released from the monastery, in order that she could be brought to her senses and that she abandon her former cunning tricks and be strengthened in her Orthodox Christian faith. And on December 15, Abbess Evraneia and her sisters wrote together with the officer Ivashko Fomin from the Beloozero women's Monastery of the Resurrection in Gory that upon order of the sovereign they had received the fortune-teller Daritsa from him, Ivashko.

The Chancellery of the Great Court had no knowledge of how she had left or how she was freed from the authority of the women's Resurrection Monastery in Gory or who freed her, or by what sovereign decree and how long ago; there was no report from the monastery about her in the Chancellery of the Great Court and no petition from Daritsa requesting her freedom.

Daritsa's testimonies with the application of torture

And Baba Daritsa was tortured twice. During the first torture [session,] she was given eleven blows, and her head was shaved, and water was poured on her head, and she was burned with fire.

{l. 174: She was given eleven blows, but they did not dare to torture her more than that because she is old. And with torture she said the same things she said before, written above.

And after torture that baba was given under guard to Captain of the Musketeers (streletskoi golova) *Gavrila Bokin. And Roman Okinfov was given under guard to Captain of the Musketeers Obram Lopukhin.}*

During the second torture [session,] she was given twelve blows and burned with fire. And the dish over which she told fortunes and the scoop from which she drank were burned at the same time that she was burned. With the torture, she said the same things that she had said during the interrogation and did not say anything more.

Daritsa's further testimony

And that Baba Daritsa said that others in that same village Volodiatino know how to tell fortunes: the peasant Filka Mikulin's wife, Olenka, daughter of Kuzma, and her daughter Ulitka. Olenka casts bones (*rozvodit kost'iami*) and gives people roots, while her daughter Ulitka uses salt. But she doesn't know for sure whether that woman Olenka and her daughter Ulitka have sufficient knowledge to practice fortune-telling.

{ll. 181–82: (Baba Daritsa adds the following tantalizing details to her testimony implicating the other women:) Olenka's mother was a fortune-teller too. Baba Daritsa doesn't know whether that Olenka and her daughter Ulitka have sufficient skill to do real fortune-telling, but she, Daritsa, sat in irons with that Olenka on charges of fortune-telling under the current bailiff, Petr Kruglikov. But having taken a bribe from Olenka, the bailiff freed her from irons. And what he took from her, that she doesn't know. But he freed her, Daritsa, from irons without a bribe.}

And those women identified by Baba Daritsa were taken from Suzdal Province and questioned separately.

Testimonies of Olenka, Ulitka, and Filka Mikulin

{*July 26, 1647*} And the woman Olenka said that she simply casts bones without saying any incantations, and that there are forty-one bones involved in her casting. She learns what to say from the way the bones fall: if three bones fall out three times in a row, then she can say that they fell in a good way, but if they fall differently she says that they fell badly. Beyond that she doesn't know how to tell fortunes, and she knows no types of whispering of spells or incantations, and she doesn't keep harmful roots, and she doesn't bewitch people and doesn't know any curses. {*ll. 194–95: Whether her daughter Ulitka knows how to throw bones or gives roots to people, that she doesn't know, because she lives separately and not with her, and Ulitka was given in marriage and moved to the village of Volodiatino thirteen years ago, and she, Olenka, lives in the village of Gorodishche. She never went to the baba Daritsa of Volodiatino for fortune-telling or anything else*}.

And her daughter Ulitka said that she does not cast bones and does not read salt, and that she doesn't know how to tell fortunes, and that she doesn't give any roots to anyone. She said she didn't learn fortune-telling from anyone, and she doesn't bewitch people with spells, and she can't help people in any of those ways. {l. 195: *She doesn't know whether her mother tells fortunes with bones or whether she has any roots or gives roots to people or for what purpose she gives them roots. She doesn't know because her mother gave her in marriage thirteen years ago and she, Ulitka, doesn't live in the same village as her mother.*}

Confrontation between Olenka and Ulitka and their accuser, Baba Daritsa

{l. 195: And that same day, boyars Vas. Iv. Morozov and others went to the torture chamber and at torture they questioned the women harshly about fortune-telling and roots.}

And the woman Olenka and her daughter Ulitka were placed face to face with Baba Daritsa.

And confronted directly, Baba Daritsa said that Olenka casts bones and gives little children water with roots to drink and pours water over those

suffering from bewitchment. And her, Olenka's, husband, a peasant from Volodiatino named Filka, is a simple man who knows nothing.

Further interrogation and torture

And the woman Olenka was tortured to find out about her fortune-telling and her use of roots and bewitchment. She was given thirty blows, and her head was shaved, and water was poured on her head and back, and after that she was burned with fire. But she repeated her previous words: that she divines over bones in a simple fashion without any incantation, and she knows nothing except that.

And Olenka's husband, the peasant Filka Mikulin, during the interrogation conducted in sight of the instruments of torture, said that in determining his guilt, all is up to the will of God and the sovereign. He doesn't want to keep anything secret, and he wants to testify truthfully. His wife Olenka does cast bones; whether she really knows how, he doesn't know for sure. And she pours water over small children and bites their hernias with her teeth (gryzhu u nikh zubami zagryzhyvaet*; a commonly reported approach—literal or magically figurative—to hernias in small children; the word for hernia, or sharp pain, and for gnaw have the same root*). As for whether she gives roots to people and for what purpose, and whether his stepdaughter, the woman Ulitka, tells fortunes and what she might use to do so—he doesn't know anything about that, because his stepdaughter lives in another village. And he, Filka, doesn't know how to tell fortunes and he does not seek out fortune-telling or any kind of evil.

And Filka was frightened by the sight of the implements of torture, and his hands were tied to a hook (*that is, he was hung, dangling from the ceiling, on what is called the strappado or "the rack"*). He did not say anything more to implicate his wife and his stepdaughter.

And the woman Olenka admitted her guilt in response to her husband's answers: she was guilty before the sovereign in that she had not admitted everything before torture, during the interrogation, or with torture. She did pour water over children suffering from bewitchment and illnesses and gnawed at their hernias while saying an incantation, and her incantation

goes like this: "St. Tikhon, St. Minia, St. Merkurei, First-Called [Apostles] Peter and Paul, the Highest Apostle, Warm Intercessor,[25] save and have mercy, and extinguish all illnesses for this soul So-and-so," which she addresses to the person over whom she is incanting. She says the same incantation when she bites their hernias.

And her mother taught her, Olenka, the incantation, but her mother died about ten years ago.

And when she was ill with a fever, some four years ago, a Tatar man came to them in the village, but she doesn't remember where he came from or what he was called, and until that point she had not known him. And he, seeing her misery, gave her some small fuzzy root and told her to drink water with that root, and she got better from it. {*l. 199: The grass of that root is of a white color and is more than an arshin (2 ft. 4 in.) high.*} And having examined that root, she went out into the fields to find that same kind of root and she gave it to people ill with fever and told them to drink it with water, and today she has some of that root in her home. {*l. 200: At present both the root that the Tatar gave her and the fever root that she found in the field after looking at the original root are at her home in the shed in a box, tied up in a cloth, not locked.*} But she does not have any harmful roots and doesn't know how to bewitch anyone and she doesn't read salt. She has been doing this for about four years. But whether her daughter tells fortunes or heals small children, she doesn't know because her daughter lives in another village.

And the woman Olenka was tortured a second time and burned with fire. She was also given thirty-five blows. She repeated the same things.

And after that, before the instruments of torture, Baba Daritsa was placed face to face with Olenka's daughter, the woman Ulitka, and Baba Daritsa said that she had seen Ulitka take salt in her hands and pass the salt over a child's head, and she says that she gave [children] water infused with a root to drink. But whether she knows how to tell fortunes for real, that she doesn't know.

And the woman Ulitka was tortured harshly to determine whether she had used roots or any kinds of plants or grasses or practiced fortune-telling.

She was given thirty- one blows and burned with fire, her head was shaved, and water was poured over her head. And with the torture she repeated her previous testimony: that she does not know how to tell fortunes with anything and doesn't know about grasses and roots.

A captain of the musketeers, Stepan Zherebtsov, was dispatched to the village of Volodiatino and the hamlet of Gorodishche, where those women live, and ordered to search for roots and grasses and bring them to Moscow. According to his report, Zherebtsov found a root in the woman Olenka's house, as well as a small bundle of ground fir cones and a small amount of ground grasses wrapped in some paper, and some kind of animal's bladders, rather dry.

{ll. 208–9: [It was ordered that] for identification of that root by name, someone should go to the merchants in the vegetable market. Ofonka Chepuchinshchik, Ontomonka Kirilov, Petrushka Stepanov, Ivashko Kostiantinov, and Horse Master Liubimko Ivanov said that they don't know anything about this. Ulianka, the wife of the vegetable merchant Ondrei Chepuchinshchik, said that she doesn't know anything about it either.}

And they showed all of that to the trading people in the vegetable stalls. And those trading people looked at them and said that they didn't know anything about them.

And the woman Olenka said that the ground fir cones were for problems of the womb or stomach (*utroba*), while the dried animal's bladder was actually a snake skin that she found in the fields, and she had heard that people carry it to ward off fever, while the root and ground grasses were given to her by the Tatar to treat fever, as she said during interrogation.

Captain Stephan Zherebtsov did not find any grasses and roots at the woman Ulitka's house. He took only a small piece of walnut soap that was tied up in cloth.

Early verdicts and continuing investigations

And the fortune-teller Baba Daritsa, and the woman Olenka, Filka Mikulin's wife, and her daughter, the woman Ulitka, are being held under guard.

Filka Mikulin has been set free because the evidence doesn't point to him. And the New Savior Monastery was to give over the monastery's peasant Simonko Tarasov to the lay brother Ortiushka Tolmachev with an inventory.

And the bailiffs of the sovereign's properties Ilia Loshakov and Prokofii Nosov were to be released with a signed guarantee (*attesting to their continued good behavior and that they will appear in court when called*), pending the sovereign's order.

On July 27, Nikita Ivanovich Romanov sent his people Petrushka, Borisko, and Tikhonko, sons of Stepan Korovin, to Boyar Ivan Vasilevich Morozov and his fellow judges to be investigated. And the boyar's people were individually questioned: do they, Petrushka and his brothers, know about the fortune-teller woman Daritsa and did they ever go to her home for fortune-telling, or had they sent someone to her? And they had better tell the truth about it. And Petrushka Korovin said that he did not know Baba Daritsa, and he had never been to her house and had not sent anyone to her. And when the boyar Nikita Ivanovich in the previous fall of this year 1646, was with the sovereign in Sergiev on campaign and left the campaign for his Suzdal estate in the village of Lychovo, his father Stepan Korovin was serving at that time as the estate bailiff at the boyar's estate in Suzdal in the village Kishleevo. And he, Petrushka, with his father rode from the village Kishleevo to the village Lychovo to Boyar Nikita Ivanovich to pay their respects. And his middle brother, Borisko Korovin, was with the boyar Nikita Ivanovich at that time. And his youngest brother, Tikhonko, was staying in Moscow. And in the village Lychovo at that time the bailiff was Ortemei Rakov and the village elder was Vlasko Iadin. And in Kishleevo the village elder was Naumko Gavrilov. And his father, Stepan, was ordered to serve as bailiff in Lychovo three weeks before Easter. But he, Petrushka, and his father and his brothers never went to that baba's place in the village of Volodiatino for any reason. And Petrushka swore to it that they had never been at Baba Daritsa's.

Borisko Korovin said that in the previous year of 1645 in the fall, he was on the Sergiev campaign with Boyar Nikita Ivanovich and he went with him

from the campaign to the estate in the village of Lychovo, but he was never in Volodiatino at the fortune-teller Daritsa's for any reason.

Tikhonko Korovin said that he lived with his father in the village of Kishleevo and that the village is twenty versts from Volodiatino. But he had never been at that fortune-teller's Baba Daritsa's place for any reason.

And Baba Daritsa was interrogated about this, and she said: last fall, after St. Michael's day someone called Korovin was at her place, but she can't remember his real name. People told her that he was short, had a big smooth beard flecked with grey, a deep voice, but she said that she wouldn't recognize that Korovin because she doesn't see. Whether Korovin came himself or it was someone who falsely took his name—she doesn't know, but whoever it was, he called himself the bailiff from Lychovo.

He did not say his name, but others said that he came from Kishleevo. And they placed Petrushko and Borisko and Tikhonko Korovin across from Baba Daritsa, and that baba looked them in the eye and said that she does not know them and that they had not been at her place and that she did not recognize any of them.

And Stepashko Korovin said that in the fall of the year 1645, Boyar Nikita Ivanovich Romanov came to his estate in Suzdal in the village of Lychovo and he, Stepashko, with his son Petrushka came to the village of Lychovo from the boyar's village of Kishleevo to pay their respects to Boyar Nikita Ivanovich. And having spent one night in Lychovo, they were dismissed and went back to Kishleevo. But he had never been at Baba Daritsa's for any reason and had nothing divined for him.

And Stepashko Korovin was placed before Baba Daritsa and she looked at him and said that he had not been at her place and that she doesn't know him, but someone who called himself Korovin had been at her place, a short man with a smooth beard … (*end of phrase missing in the text*).

And those people, Stepashko Korovin and his sons Petrushka, Borisko, and Tikhonko, were given over to Boyar Nikita Ivanovich Romanov's man Mikhail Sokolov on that same day since the case did not implicate them.

Verdicts

November 28, 1647: the boyars heard this report and issued the following sentences:

- the Volodiatinskaia fortune-teller Baba Daritsa was to be assigned a priest so she could take confession and then she should be burned.
- the woman Olenka, Kuzmin's daughter, wife of Filka Mikulin, and her daughter Ulitka, and their husbands and children were to be exiled with all of their possessions to New Town (*Novyi Tsarëv Alekseev Gorod; newly chartered in 1647, Tsar Aleksei-town, now called Novyi Oskol, was on the fortified Ukrainian border, a place of hard military service and exile, about 450 miles south of Moscow*).
- Simonka Tarasov of the village of Orudev in Dmitrovsk District, peasant of the New Savior Monastery, was to be exiled for all eternity to the Tsar's New Town with his wife and children and all their possessions, and a report about them is to be sent to the Chancellery of the Great Court.
- The captain Prokofii Nosov is to be exiled for all eternity to New Town, wherever he will be required, with his wife and children, and all their possessions, and he is to serve as a cavalry soldier (*v detekh boiarskikh*).
- The boyars ruled that Ilia Loshakov should be released and allowed to remain at the sovereign's palace as previously.
- Prince Mikhailo Kozlovskii's wife, Princess Marina, and Prince Savelei Kozlovskii's wife, Vasilisa, were fined fifty rubles each for seeking out fortune-telling.
- The boyars ordered that the boyar Mikita Ivanovich Romanov be instructed that he should punish his people, Stepashko Korovin and his children, himself, on his estate.

By the sovereign's order, the levied fines were not to be collected from Prince Mikhailo Kozlovskii's wife, Princess Marina, and Prince Savelei Kozlovskii's wife, Vasilisa. The boyar Aleksei Mikhailovich Lvov petitioned the sovereign on behalf of Princess Marina.

4.6 A CASE OF SUSPICIOUS ROOTS: ROGATAIA BABA AND THE USE OF TORTURE (1647–48)

Source: RGADA f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 567, ll. 539–49; partially published (ll. 539–40) in N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Materialy po istorii meditsiny v Rossii* (Tomsk: Tipo-litografiia Sibirsk, T—va pechatn. dela, 1907), 4, no. 20, 157–61.

This case of possessing roots began with an accusation arising among military servitors sitting in prison for unstated charges in Chern, a fortified outpost almost two hundred miles south of Moscow. Several rounds of exchanges between the local governor and the tsar and the central Military Chancellery survive, showing the repetitive reports that were sent from the provinces and the repetitive orders to continue to investigate and torture that emanated from the center. The successive rounds of torture produced more and more incriminating confessions from each of the suspects. It is impossible to determine how much the process of torture elicited the truth, and how much it forced its victims to confess to imaginary crimes or to meet the expectations of the interrogators in order to stop the pain. This is a deeply affecting case, given the information included toward the end of the record by the governor-interrogator-judge-torturer, who expressed his doubts about continuing to torture one particular suspect.

Aside from the questions the case raises about the morality, justification, and (dubious) efficacy of torture as a means of eliciting truth, and about responsible historical methods for reading testimony extracted through torture, the case also provokes other questions. For instance, if the mere possession of a root sufficed to doom people to the rack, why did the authorities feel comfortable consulting with "women masters of the craft and potion makers (zhonskie mastera i zeleshchiki)" to figure out the nature of the roots found in this case? Similarly, the suspects' willingness to admit contact with the "naked" root and their reluctance to confess to any association with the "mossy" or "shaggy" root remind us that their categories of licit and illicit may have been quite nuanced.

Every Orthodox Christian was expected to wear a cross around his or her neck. Its removal was associated with only a few specific activities: bathing in the bathhouse, having sex, or working magic. In Chapter 9 on satanic pacts, we will see cases where removal of the crucifix pendant formed an important act in a magical rite. Here, however, the participants wore their crosses like good Christians should. Tying a root to the pendant, they combined the protective force of the crucifix with the talismanic charge of the appended root.

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich from Chern governor Ivan Mikhailovich Koltovskii

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, your slave Ivashka Koltovskii petitions.

On November 16 of this year, 1647, the guard Ovdokimka Sidarov came to me in the governor's office and brought two roots of unknown kinds, and he said to me:

> The prisoners Volodimir Sevriukov, a local servitor from the town of Chern, and a Cherkassian (*a Ukrainian or Cossack*) from the (*nearby*) town of Efremov, Panka Kireev and his comrades, are prisoners under his supervision, held under guard in the guard hall. That Volodimir Sevriukov took off his trousers and put them down in that same guard house. While the guard Ovdokimka and Sevriukov's fellow prisoners—Kelmen Iarygin and the rest, all servicemen from Chern—looked on, the Cherkassian Panka took two roots out from the pouch of Volodimir's trousers and gave them to the guard Ovdokimka so that he would bring the roots to me, your slave, in the governor's office. And that Cherkassian Panka said, when he took Volodimir Sevriukov's trousers, he made sure that the guard Ovdokimka and his fellow prisoners were watching so Volodimir couldn't slander him by saying that he wanted to take the trousers and put them on himself….

I, your slave, interrogated those prisoners Klemen Iarygin and the others with whom he sits under guard, and I also interrogated Volodimir Sevriukov about those roots. The prisoners Klemen Iarygin and his fellows said that they saw when the Cherkassian Panka Kireev took those roots from the pocket of Volodimir's trousers. Volodimir said that he took off his trousers and Panka Kireev took them, but he claimed that he didn't have any roots in his pocket. He insisted that because of personal hostility, his fellow prisoners with whom he sits under guard put those roots in his pocket [to get him in trouble].

I, your slave, having sealed those two roots, ordered them kept in the governor's office, and I ordered Volodimir put in prison until your order arrives.

(On obverse is written the sovereign's order):

> The Sovereign's order was sent to Chern to the governor, telling him to put Volodka Sevriukov in face-to-face confrontation with the Cherkassian about the root, and to find out why he kept

the root on him, and investigate harshly, and if it will lead to torture (*i.e., if the evidence is sufficient or the charges serious enough to warrant torture*) then question them harshly under torture, so that they will speak the truth. And question anyone who might know how to find out who found out about the roots.

From Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich to Chern governor Ivan Mikhailovich Koltovskii

You wrote to us on November 17 reporting that the local official Ovdokimka Sidarov brought roots to the governor's office, saying those roots were given to him for safekeeping by the prisoner, the Cherkassian from Efremov, Panka Kireev.

Volodimir denied the accusation and said he was framed and the charge stemmed from hostility, but the others said yes, the roots came from his pocket.

And you threw Volodka (*a diminutive form of the name Volodimir*) in jail pending our order and asked us to send a decree. And when you get this decree (*crossed out in the manuscript:* you should question Volodka and the Cherkassian Panka about the root separately) about what that root is useful for, and whether Volodka took that root or was given that root to use in fortune-telling and bewitchment (*vorozhba i porcha*). And who gave it to him? And if that root was for evil purposes, why did he keep it on his person? Or did the Cherkassian Panka plant it on him, and out of what kind of hostility? If Volodka denies all connection to that root, you should place him in face-to-face confrontation with Panka and question them hard at the place of torture and with torture. Question them yourself, personally, so you can find the truth about that root. And if Volodka incriminates someone else in connection with that root, you should put those people in direct confrontation with him….

And you should also question surrounding people, women masters of the craft and potion makers, about whether they recognize this root. And if Volodka says anything in confrontation with Panka and in questioning with torture, or if the surrounding people say anything about the root, you should write down all those people by name and their testimony in a list and

send it to the Military Chancellery in Moscow. Moscow, December 28, 1647.

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich from Chern governor Ivan Mikhailovich Koltovskii

Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, your slave Ivashka Koltovskii petitions. Your order commanding me to find out about the roots arrived on January 9, 1648, from the Military Chancellery with the seal of Secretary Grigorii Larionov.

And Volodka said that he had told me the full truth without torture, but he didn't say anything about the root, so he was ordered to be tortured with harsh tortures and to be burned with fire, and if Volodka confesses to anything about that root and if he speaks out against anyone else about that root, naming who gave it to him and for what evil purpose (*durna*), I should find those people and put them in face-to-face confrontation with him and question them and find out everything, to discover who gave Volodka the root and for what evil purpose. Volodka or any other people to whom the investigation leads should be tortured for this criminality.

So I ordered him tortured and kept under close guard, and questioned him harshly, and he said the root that was taken out of his trousers was given to him by Ivashko's mother, Ragat's widow, called Ragataia Baba (*Ragat's old lady, or his witch*), but he doesn't know her name. That Ragataia Baba healed his son from hemorrhage (*pritka*) and she gave [him] that root so as to protect him from hemorrhage. And in response to Volodka's testimony, I, your slave, ordered that Ragataia Baba be located in connection with the root and having been found, placed in direct confrontation with Volodka, and I interrogated her about those roots.

At the face-to-face confrontation, Rogataia Baba denied everything concerning those roots. She said she didn't give [him] those roots, but she did cure Volodka's son of illness caused by bewitchment, and I ordered Volodka and Rogataia Baba brought to torture and ordered them stripped naked and, having bound their hands with rope, I ordered them raised on the rack for torture. With torture, Volodka said the same thing: that she

gave him the roots. And with torture she confessed to having used one small, naked, smooth root; she said that when she healed Volotka's son from hemorrhage, she gave him that root, and she told him to wash his son with that root, called *polunochnik* (*nightbird, night owl*), and she told him to tie that naked, smooth root secretly to his cross, but she denied the other, shaggy root. She said she didn't give him that root. And after that round of torture, I ordered Volodka put in prison, and I ordered Rogataia Baba given out under guard, and while under guard that Rogataia Baba admitted to both roots. She said she gave both roots to Volodka's wife and instructed her about the other root and what spell to say over vodka. So following her testimony, I ordered Volodka's wife found and put her in direct confrontation with Rogataia Baba.

Volodka's wife, Annitsa, said the two roots that were taken from her husband were given to her by that Rogataia Baba in order to heal her son from hemorrhage, and that Rogataia Baba told her to tie that naked root secretly to his cross, and when her son got better, she untied that root from her son's cross and put it in the pocket of her husband's pants to keep him safe. Her husband carried the root in his pants without knowing it. And Rogataia Baba said she gave Volodka's wife one small, naked, smooth root taken from a puddle. That root is called *polunochnik*. She denied giving her the other, shaggy root. And I, your slave, ordered Volodka's wife and Rogataia Baba raised on the rack in torture, and with torture Volodka's wife said that Rogataia Baba gave her both of those roots.

And Rogataia Baba said with torture that she was guilty of providing both roots. She said that she gave both of those roots to Volodka's wife, but not for evil. She gave them to heal her son from bewitchment. And that Rogataia Baba is old and blind, and she fainted during torture, and I gave her those roots to feel with her hands. And she felt those roots with her hands and brought them to her nose to sniff.

I showed the roots to many ranks of people to find out what evil those roots contain, but no one said anything, and I, your slave, don't dare torture Rogataia Baba further about those roots, lest she die during torture.

And I ordered that Rogataia Baba and Volodka's wife be put under guard, and Volotka's wife sits in jail until your order arrives about whether I should torture that Rogataia Baba more about the roots. And I will do whatever you order.

From Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich to Chern governor Ivan Mikhailovich Koltovskii

February 14, 1648: Free Volodka and his wife; keep Rogataia Baba and see if she has any previous witchcraft record.

(Here the documentary record ends, so we have no resolution of the case.)

4.7 A MASS OUTBREAK OF POSSESSION IN THE TOWN OF LUKH (1656–60)

Sources: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 314, ll. 159–67, 192; stlb. 300, ll. 1–99 (selected passages). A different excerpt from this case has been previously published in "A Russian Witch-trial at Lukh, 1657," in The Witchcraft Sourcebook, ed. Brian P. Levack (New York: Routledge, 2003), 214–20; revised for second edition (2015), 234–39.

In the autumn of 1657, the townspeople of the provincial town of Lukh, northeast of Moscow, submitted a petition to their local governor, Nazarii Alekseev, complaining that a number of their wives had been bewitched (literally, "spoiled," *isporcheny*) with malevolent hexes. The women, along with a few girls and one young man, now were manifesting the distinctive and disturbing symptoms of *klikushestvo*–that is, "shrieking" or "possession." By the time the case drew to its deadly conclusion with five executions and at least two outstanding death warrants, Lukh experienced the largest outbreak of possession yet detected in seventeenth-century Russia, with forty sufferers–thirty-seven women and girls and three men–identified in the lengthy court record. An additional ten people complained of other forms of magical assault, such as impotence (*uskop*), hernias (*gryzhi*), and swollen testicles (*kily*) during the prolonged plague of bewitchment. At least

137 people testified during the course of the investigation, out of a population of less than six hundred, indicating that the terror must have gripped the entire town.

Like other trials of the period, this one was initiated from below, by members of the community who lodged petitions with tsarist officials. Responding to these complaints, the secular authorities investigated harshly, under close supervision from the center. The nature of the accusations and the social profile of the accused also are quite typical of Muscovite witchcraft trials. The majority of people accused of practicing witchcraft were male. Most came from the peasant and modest town-dwelling populations that figure into this case, and several were accused of practicing magical healing, which was considered a violation of God's will and raised suspicions that the healer might have magically inflicted the disease in the first place (as at least one of them admits in this case). Suspicions were heightened if money was involved, if the healer charged for his or her services.

Torture figures prominently in the record. As was standard Muscovite practice, officials carefully noted when testimony was freely given and when it was coerced. Interrogation was conducted in choreographed sequence, starting with simple questioning, followed by questioning in the torture chamber in eyeshot of the implements of torture, and finally, under the full onslaught of torture. The human toll of this practice is evident. The suspects initially refused to confess or to implicate anyone else in their supposed crimes, but most succumbed by the time they endured a third round of torture, broken by the brutal force of rack, flame, and crushing hot pincers. Under this pressure, some of the victims named those closest to them: wives, brothers, friends, but others resolutely identified only people long dead and therefore safe from the torture chamber.

Since the investigation stretched out across four years—and even then was not yet closed—a number of different officials were involved in overseeing the case. At least three different governors (*voevody*) feature in the documents: Nazarii Alekseev, Grigorii Koisarov, and Mikifor Obruttskoi. Two special investigators (*syshchiki*) were sent from the Military Chancellery with the sole purpose of prosecuting the case: Iakov Likharev and Ivan Romanchiukov.

The Lukh case left an extensive record in the archives, with traces surfacing in several different places. The extract provided here is lengthy and gives a good sense of Muscovite administrative-judicial process, but it is still sharply abbreviated from its full form. We have taken some liberties in combining segments from two different archival documents and have moved some sections around to try to set the pieces in chronological order. This is not a straightforward task, as the dating is not always clear and the documents tend to repeat each other and to overlap. The sutures between various pieces are indicated in the text below.

Another extensive segment of this case, the testimony of the possessed women, appears as Document 8.2.

{*Stlb. 300, ll. 2–6*} In the Military Chancellery it was written out:

In past year 1657 on February 2, Governor Grigorei Koisarov wrote to Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, from Lukh.

He wrote: In the past year 1655/56, there began in Lukh an outbreak of magical bewitchment, hiccuping, and painful aching and contortions (*volshebnaia porcha ikota i lomota*) and crying out in the voices of all kinds of animal. The wife of Matvei, priest of the Church of the Resurrection, and the daughter-in-law of the townsperson Fedor Popov, the wife of Iakov Trofimov, (*and others*) were afflicted.

(In their reports Governor Koisarov and Governor Nazarii Alekseev, who also served in Lukh in early 1658, included the original petitions from residents of the town who raised the issue of possession and requested that the tsar take action. One of these petitions follows, along with the official response:)

I, Petrushka Vasilev, of the town of Lukh, petition you. Sovereign, I want to lodge a complaint against Lukh townsman Terentei (called Tereshka), son of Kalina Malakurov. In this year 1657 on St. Nicholas Day, Tereshka bewitched my wife, Irinitsa. He cast a shrieking curse on her, motivated by some unknown grudge or scheme. Merciful Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great and Little and White Russia, favor me, your orphan! Order Tereshka interrogated to see what he was scheming when he bewitched my wife or what grudge he had against us. Tsar, Sovereign, have mercy!

(Clerks of the central chancellery in Moscow routinely summarized the cases that came to them from the provinces and collected all of the relevant documents, gluing them together into a long, continuous strip and rolling them up into a long scroll. The clerks' notes introduce documents sent back and forth between Moscow and Lukh.)

In the chancellery was written out:

In past year, 1657, [Lukh Governor] Nazarii Alekseev wrote to the tsar. A bewitchment had broken out in Lukh, afflicting the wives of townspeople with magical bewitchment and hiccuping and racking pain, and all kinds of bestial cries. While bewitched, they accused Lukh townspeople Tereshka Malakurov, Igoshka and Ianka Salautin, Fedka Kuzmin, and Tereshka Malakurov's wife, Olenka. They also accuse Prince Ivan Khvorostinin's peasant Ianka Erokhin and the monastic peasant Arkhipko Fadeev.

(The case proved to be too difficult for the local governor to handle, so a special investigator, Iakov Likharev, was dispatched to conduct the investigation.)

And in the past year 1657 on February 7, by the sovereign's order the attendant of the royal table (*stol'nik*) Iakov Likharev was dispatched from the Military Chancellery to Lukh to investigate the matter of witchcraft (*volshebnoe delo*), to find the people who were bewitched and those people who bewitched them. And to whomsoever it leads, those people should be tortured harshly. And if some people started to confess to magical criminality (*volshebnoe vorovstvo*), then Iakov Likharev was ordered to execute those people for their criminality (*vorovstvo*) and magical hexing (*volshebnaia porcha*), to behead the men and bury the women in the ground.

Investigative reports of the attendant of the royal table Iakov Likharev

And in the investigative reports of Iakov Likharev is written:

> Five priests, five community elders (*zemskie starosty*), and 127 townspeople spoke according to oaths they took—the priests swore on their clerical rank and the townspeople on the holy and inviolable gospel of the lord—that in the past year, 1656, on St. Nicholas Day in the spring in the church of God, the widow Tatianka, widow of the Lukh townsman Vasilii Fedorov, shrieked all day long, out of her mind. In her state of bewitchment she cried out against the widows Ogrofenka Ermolaeva and Lukeritsa Zakhareva and against the townsman Igoshka Salautin, claiming that he, Igoshka, hexed her using bewitched bread at the instruction of the widow Ogrofenka, and that the bread was brought to her by the widow Lukeritsa.

And the beggar girl Oksinitsa and Marinka, the wife of the Lukh townsman Ivan Ievlev, shrieked in bewitchment in the church of God—although Oksinitsa cried out against "female witches," without naming anyone (*glukho na bab*), while Marinka cried out against Ermolai's wife. And in the church of God, Vasilissa, the wife of Priest Matvei of the Church of the Resurrection, and Aniutka, wife of the townsman Iakushko Trofimov, also ached and contorted, without hiccups. And the townsman Deniska Olekseev and his wife Dunka said that when he was pulling water up out of

the well with a bucket, a root and some kind of grass turned up in the bucket, and he didn't recognize the root. And his wife drank that water and he threw it on himself in the bathhouse, and, he said, his wife took ill from that water. And Governor Grigorii Koisarov impounded two knots of grasses from a box belonging to the widow Ogrofenka, but whether they were the same grasses or not, they don't know.

The townsman Ianka Trofimov testified that in the past year 1656 on the Feast day of St. Tikhon, the Lukh miracle-worker (*observed on June 16 by the contemporary calendar*), his wife fell ill with an aching sickness and she roared like a bear, but he doesn't know who sent that disease to her. His wife went to pray to Ivan the Forerunner (*that is, John the Baptist*) to cure her, and the disease left her.

The townsman Ivashka Ievlev said: in the past 1656 a week before St. Elijah's Day (*July 20*), his wife Marinka was visiting at the home of the Lukh townsman Oleshka Ondreev, and during matins she began to shriek in all sorts of voices…. He doesn't know what brought that illness about, but in her illness and while out of her mind she cried out against "Ermolai's wife," but she didn't name her more fully.

When she stops shrieking, she doesn't remember anything. He and his wife fulfilled a promise and went to pray to Ivan the Forerunner and to Tikhon, the miracle-worker of Lukh, and since then that illness has passed.

Five townspeople said: in the past year 1656 on the day of St. Tikhon the Lukh miracle-worker, in the church of God, the beggar girl Oksinitsa was overcome with aches and illness and misery, and she shrieked about a female witch (*baba*) and a heretic (*eresnitsa*) without naming her, and she says that the townswoman Tatiana, Fedor Popov's daughter-in-law, bewitched her through bread, and the widow Lukeritsa, wife of Potanin, sent that bread to her. And people saw how she ached and contorted and shrieked when she was at Tatianka's house. In her bewitchment she shrieks against the widow Ogrofenka and widow Lukeritsa and against Igoshka Salautin. She says Igoshka Salautin cast a hex on that bread, and the widow Lukeritsa brought that hexed bread to her.

And the townsman Fedka Popov in questioning said his daughter-in-law (*nevestka*) the widow Tatianitsa is sick. "We don't know who bewitched her." She says a lot of things in her demoniac state (*v besnovanii*), but it makes no sense (*tovo slushat nechevo*), and as soon as she gets better, she recalls nothing, and what caused that illness to start, he doesn't know.

And Lukh townsman Igoshka Salautin and the widow Lukeritsa were tortured harshly three times, and burned with fire, and pulled up by the navel with burning hot iron pincers, and undergoing these tortures they still admitted nothing to incriminate themselves and said they know nothing. The widow Lukeritsa said she brought the bread innocently, not with any witchcraft in mind, and she asked [the beggar girl Oksinitsa] her name without any ill intent, because she wanted to pray for her to Tikhon the miracle-worker.

Verdict regarding the widows Lukeritsa and Orinitsa

(For unclear reasons, suspicion shifts away from the widows Lukeritsa and Orinitsa, and the tsar extends his mercy to them:)

> {*Stlb. 300, l. 1*} To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, your orphans Lukeritsa Zakharova and Igolka Salautin and Orinitsa Iarofeeva of the town of Lukh petition you, writing from dark imprisonment.

In the past year 1656/7, the widow Tatiana of that same town of Lukh was seized (*oderzhima*) by a falling illness, and in her illness the widow Tatiana spoke out against us, your orphans, claiming that we bewitched her and because of her incrimination, Governor Grigorei Borisov Kaisarov put us orphans in prison. He tortured me, poor unfortunate Lukeritsa, harshly with various kinds of tortures, and after having tortured me, he wrote to you, Sovereign, in Moscow. And in answer to his report, by your order, a special investigator, Iakov Andreev Likharev, was sent to conduct an investigation in Lukh. He searched and investigated and nothing turned up to incriminate us, but over and above the investigation Iakov Likharev tortured us harshly with various tortures and tormented us, even though we know of nothing evil that we have done. He is torturing us without cause,

though we have said nothing to incriminate ourselves. And now we are dying of starvation and in misery from the torture and are wasting away in the dungeon. Merciful Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince, have mercy on us, your poor and defenseless orphans. Order us released from the dungeon, Sovereign, for the sake of the Savior, and of the most immaculate Mother of God, and the Moscow miracle-workers, and for your long life and health…. Free us from the dungeon so we don't perish because of that groundless slander and we don't die a hungry death. Sovereign, have mercy! Favor us!

(On the back of the page:)

The sovereign had mercy and ordered his instruction carried out: October 21, 1657.

Appointment of a new special investigator, Ivan Romanchiukov

*{stlb. 300, l. 82} (On June 28, 1658 a new special investigator (*syshchik*), Ivan Romanchiukov, was sent from the Military Chancellery to investigate, replacing Iakov Likharev.*

Suspicion gradually shifted from the widows initially named and came to focus instead on five men: Igoshka Salautin, Ianka Salautin, Tereshka Malakurov, Fedka Vasilev, and Ianka Erokhin.)

{*stlb. 300, ll. 26–32*} In the year 1658 on July 18, by order of the sovereign and by instruction from the Military Chancellery the townsmen of Lukh were questioned about Igoshka Salautin, Ianka Salautin, Tereshka Malakurov, Fedka Vasilev, and Ianka Erokhin, a landless peasant who belongs to the attendant of the royal table Prince Ivan Khvorostinin.

In questioning, the townsperson Frolko Nifantov said he has heard of no knavery (*plutovstvo*) on the part of Igoshka and Ianka Salautin or Fedka Vasiliev. Those suffering in the illness of bewitchment talk about them, but [afterward] they don't remember what they said. Tereshka treats many people, and particularly those suffering from bewitchment, but he hasn't been of any help whatsoever. "And about Ianka Erokhin, I know nothing because he wanders around playing the *gusli*" (*psaltery, a musical instrument associated with minstrelsy and banned by the Church*).

Stenka Ignatev said the same thing in questioning.

(Seventeen other townsmen, listed by name, said, collectively:)

We know of no criminal behavior (*vorovstvo*) at all on the part of Igoshka or Ianka Salautin or Fedka Vasilev. In our homes, the possessed shriek out against them, but when they recover, they don't remember what they said. But Tereshka has incantations and he takes gifts (*posuly*) in exchange (*for his healing*). He treats the possessed, but he provides no help whatsoever. And about Ianka Erokhin, we don't know anything because he is not a resident of the town. He came temporarily to play the *gusli*, and now, since winter, he's not been around. At present they say that he's left for Moscow. In their illness, the possessed shriek out against him because [a group of townsmen] petitioned against him to the sovereign. (*In other words, the women and their families feared retribution after the complaint was filed.*)

We know of no criminality on the part of Igoshka and Ianka Salautin or Fedka Vasilev, but in their illness the bewitched cry out against them, but then don't remember what they said.

Tereshka keeps incantations (*shepty*). He treated the sick and took gifts in exchange, but his treatments didn't help at all.

We don't know of any knavery on the part of Ianka Erokhin. He is not a resident of the town, and he left in the winter to go to Moscow, and at the present time he's not around. But in their illness the possessed shriek out against him, because they petitioned against him to the sovereign.

(Fifty-two townsmen of Lukh were questioned in groups of nineteen, eight, twelve, and thirteen, and all said precisely the same thing.)

Signed surety guarantee for Vasilii Kuzmin, father of Fedka Vasilev, and his commitment to search for his son

{*l. 42*} July 2, 1658: By the sovereign's order the town elders and all the townspeople of Lukh swore by the inviolable gospel and the covenant of the Lord in God's truth and testified about the townsperson Vasilii Kuzmin. His father was born in Lukh, and he himself was also born here in Lukh among us and has been a long-time taxpayer here. From the year of his birth, Vasilii is about sixty. They have been good people here in Lukh and never go about causing any kind of mischief, and no one has had any kind of trouble with them. And they have served in many capacities in the sovereign's service, and they sat at our town council meetings and we never saw any kind of trouble from them, and they have never been sentenced to any state fines or penalties. And in this year 1657/58, Vasilii Kuzmin Sapozhnikov is the head

of the customs office in charge of collection of state customs fees. And that is our report.

{*l. 45*} By order of the sovereign, a signed surety document was taken from townsmen of Lukh guaranteeing that Vaska Kuzmin, Fedka's father, will search for his son Fedka, and once he finds him, will place him in custody of Prince Ivan Khvorostinin's peasant Timoshka Ivanov. And if he doesn't, his guarantors will suffer whatever consequences the sovereign orders.

Interrogation of the suspects

{*l. 29–33*}1658 on July 19: Tereshka Malakurov was subjected to interrogation and was asked whether he bewitched the townsmen's wives, and whether he said incantations over grasses and roots to bewitch them, and whether he treated the sick: the wife of Priest Matvei and Fedor Shelmin's daughter-in-law, and did he take payment from them, and did he heal hernias and who taught him how to heal?

And Tereshka Malakurov in questioning said he never bewitched any of the townspeople's wives, and he never said incantations over grasses or roots. He didn't treat the wife of Priest Matvei and Fedor Shelmin's daughter-in-law in their illness, and he never took anything from them for such treatment. He is guilty before the righteous sovereign only in this, that he treated small children for hernias and hemorrhage using words. He learned from a horse healer (*konoval*) in the village of Malechkino, past the village of Parskoe, about twenty years ago, but, he said, "what the name of the horse healer was, that I don't recall. And that horse healer has since died."

That same day, Arkhipko Fadeev was subjected to interrogation and said that he never bewitched any townspeople in Lukh of either the male or female sex. And at the wedding of Mikifor Ivanov he loosed a protective charm … to protect from harmful spells that cause impotence. And he healed the townspeople Sergunka Tretiakov and Emelka Sergeev, and he tied off a hernia for Ianka Salautin, and he heals small children by stopping hemorrhage associated with hernias, using only words. He learned from his

uncle Eremka Kirianov. He was a peasant of Temka Fedorov Zelenikhin, but now, he said, "my uncle has been dead for ten years or more. I know nothing more than this, and do not go around working bad things other than the fact that I heal with words, and when I pray, I invoke the apostles and saints, and I don't know about anything else."

That same day, Igoshka Salautin was subjected to interrogation, and he said that he never bewitched any townspeople in Lukh of either the male or female sex and knows nothing about who bewitched them.

And he was tortured by the attendant of the royal table Iakov Likharev in connection with this matter previously by order of the sovereign, but, he said, "I never confessed anything or implicated myself in any way, and I know nothing about who bewitched them."

That same day, in the torture chamber, confronted with the implements of torture, Tereshka Malakurov said:

> there is nothing further to hold against me other than the fact that I heal small children from hernias and hemorrhage using words, and I learned from the horse healer in the village of Malechkino on the patrimonial estate of the attendant of the royal table Prince Fedor Nikitich Boriatinskii, and what that horse healer's name was, I don't remember. In this I am guilty, but I never bewitched the town wives. I only treated the wife of Priest Matvei, and for that I took from him seven *grivnas*, one *altyn* (*small coins*). But the priest's wife died of that bewitchment. I wasn't able to heal her. I tried saying incantations over grasses. And concerning Fedor Stepanov's daughter-in-law, I treated her too by saying incantations over grass, and I took for that one ruble, but I wasn't able to cure her either.

Tortured hard with pincers and burned and beaten on his back with eighty-five blows, he repeated, "I know nothing further about who bewitched them."

Transcript of the interrogation of Arkhipko Fadeev

That same day, the monastic peasant Arkhipko Fadeev was interrogated while standing by the implements of torture in the torture chamber, and he said and confessed that he heals small children of hernias and hemorrhage, and at the wedding of Mikifor Ivanov he released a protective charm, and he also cured two townsmen Sergushka Tretiakov and Emelka Sergeev of

impotence caused by witchcraft (*uskop*). But he didn't tie a hernia on Ianka Salautin; he only tied it off (*i.e., he didn't cause it; he cured it*).

And he was tortured hard with pincers and burned behind his balls (*za iaitsa*) and beaten with pincers. And he didn't admit to anything else or offer any information on who caused the bewitchment.

Torture testimony of Igoshka Salautin

That same day, Igoshka Salautin was brought to the torture chamber, and by the implements of torture he said he never bewitched any wives of townspeople, "and I know nothing at all." And he was tortured hard with pincers and burned and was given fifty-six blows on his back. And with torture, he added nothing and insisted, "I know nothing."

Confession of Tereshka Malakurov

On July 23, Tereshka Malakurov, confronted again with the implements of torture in the torture chamber, said and confessed: "I learned sorcery (*volshebstvo*) from that same horse healer, Oska, but I don't remember whose son he was. I learned on the patrimonial estate of the royal table attendant Prince Fedor Nikitich Boriatinskii in the village of Malechkino. That horse healer died. But before that, I gave him a payment (*mogorets*) of one *poltina* (a coin), and he would stand and release a curse on the wind, on a dog, and on enchanted salt, and it would wind along streets and crossroads, and whoever crossed its path would be seized by woe (*toska*) and would shake and shriek in all kinds of voices and gnaw at themselves and bite other people. But anyone who passes by it would live better. I started releasing curses on the wind and saying incantations over salt and bewitching people three years ago, and I bewitched them with the idea that I could then heal the bewitched people and earn a living and feed myself that way. At first I sent my spells sweeping through at the crossroads on Nikolskaia Street and later at the butchers' row at the market. I treated people, but I wasn't able to cure them.

"Arkhipko Fadeev and Igoshka and Ianka Salautin and Fedka Vasilev and Ianka Erokhin learned nothing about this from me, and they didn't know

how to bewitch people. But on St. Nicholas Day in the fall, when the bewitched began to cry out in church against Fedka and Ianka Erokhin, they got scared and left town. About Fedka Vasilev, I don't know whether it's true that he bewitched people, but Ianka Erokhin told me several times that he bewitched Stepan Krasilnik's daughter Maria, Nazarii Fokin's wife. He said he bewitched her because he was playing the *gusli* at Nazarii's house for a whole day and they didn't give him anything, and Nazarii's wife laughed at him. Ianka tried to wait them out, but when they went out of the hut and left, he took a scarf of theirs, and he wiped himself with it. And because of that, Stepan's daughter was overtaken by possession. Ianka left that scarf on the table.

"But I Tereshka bewitched Fedor Shelmin's daughter-in-law and Tretiak's two daughters-in-law, and Petr Maslenikov's wife and the wife of Ivan Ievlev the Younger." And after that, he confessed to being guilty of all the bewitchments except for Stepan Krasilnik's daughter.

{ll. 34} *(Five local officials and five prison guards testified against Tereshka. They said Tereshka told them that when he fell asleep, many people came to him in his sleep and there was a lot of noise, and they tried to suffocate him, Tereshka, but he doesn't remember who the people were who came to him.)*

Transcript of the interrogation of Olenka, wife of Tereshka Malakurov

July 24, 1658. {*l. 35*} That same day, Tereshka's wife, Olenka, was interrogated: "Did your husband bewitch townspeople? And did he send bewitched knots (*of grass*) out of the prison with you? And did he teach you to bewitch people?"

And in questioning, Tereshka Malakurov's wife Olenka [didn't admit anything about bewitchment either against herself or her husband.]

That same day, Arkhipko's wife, Khristinka, was called for interrogation, and she said, "My husband keeps spells and heals small children, and he tied

off a hernia on Ianka Salautin. I know of no guilt to my name. I am a simple person."

That same day, Tereshka Malakurov's wife, Olenka, was taken to the torture chamber and tortured hard. But with torture she admitted nothing and incriminated no one.

And with the second [application of] torture she confessed. She had bewitched some townspeople's wives with salt: Fedka's widow and Shelma's daughter-in-law, Tanka; Kiriushka Tretiakov's wife, Fedorka; Fedka Martynov's wife, Matrenka, and his daughter-in-law, Ofroska; Petrushka Maslenikov's wife, Irinka. She said she had learned that witchcraft from her husband Tereshka, but she hadn't taught anyone herself.

Transcript of the torture testimony of Ianka Salautin

That same day, Ianka Salautin was taken to the torture chamber and with torture he said: "I had an illness: I was afflicted with a hernia (*or swelling of the testicles. Here the words* gryzha *and* kila *are used interchangeably*) that was 'tied' on me through magic, and that swelling was 'untied' by the monastic peasant Arkhipko Fadeev, but previously he had threatened me at the tavern. He asked me for beer, and I didn't give him any, and when this misery engulfed me, I told the elder (*a local official*) about this episode. In questioning before the governor Grigorii Koisarov and in their illness, the bewitched don't mention me and don't shriek out against me. But I was tortured because the interrogation led to Arkhipko, and Arkhipko denied everything."

And that Ianka was tortured hard with pincers and burned behind his testicles with pincers and was beaten with thirty-four blows to his back.

Second torture of Arkhipko Fadeev

That same day, the monastic peasant Arkhipko Fadeev was tortured for a second time, and with torture he said what he had said previously: that he didn't bewitch the townsmen's wives, but he confessed his guilt in that he had treated small children to cure them of hernias and hemorrhage.

Third torture of Tereshka Malakurov

{*ll. 35–36*} On July 26, Tereshka Malakurov was tortured harshly for a third time to discover whom he bewitched. With torture he said: "I bewitched Lukh townsman Fedor Martynov and his wife Katryna, the widow Tatiana, daughter-in-law of Fedor Shelmin, and Fedor Martynov's daughter-in-law Ofronsinia, Petr Maslennikov's wife, Orina, Semen Belianinov's wife Matrena, Isak Sidorov's wife Daria, Kiril Tretiakov's wife Ogrofena, Sergei Tretiakov's wife Fedora. I bewitched those people with enchanted salt, and I sent that enchanted salt out with my wife. I taught my wife to bewitch people, and I can bewitch them myself. And Ianka Erokhin and Fedka Vasilev were of one mind with him, and also bewitched people with him, all of us together."

Third torture of Arkhipko Fadeev

{*l. 36*} With [the third] torture, Arkhipko Fadeev said in the torture chamber, "I bewitched Fedor Lyndin's daughter-in-law Ofrosinia … (*and others*). To bewitch them I just intoned three words, and whoever I looked in the face, that one would be taken by bewitchment. And I bewitched Petr Maslennikov's wife Orina because we had an argument, so I bewitched her. And I taught Ianka Salautin everything I know about how to bewitch people. And Igoshka Salautin asked me for a charm so that cows wouldn't stray, but I didn't give it to him because he is a cowherd. And I don't remember teaching anyone else, and I don't know of anyone else who bewitches people."

Second torture of Ianka Salautin

{*l. 37*}That same day, Ianka Salautin was tortured a second time hard, and with torture he said: "I learned from the monastic peasant Arkhipko Fadeev to bewitch a motley black dog, and after that I bewitched townspeople of Lukh (*a long list of names of people he bewitched follows*). I bewitched

them by blowing out of my mouth over bast strips and into the wind, and then anyone I look in the face, even from far off, will be bewitched…."

Petition from Lukh governor Nazarii Levontevich Alekseev

{*stlb. 314, l. 159*} On July 9, 1659, the Lukh town elders Senka Anisklev and Tomilko Zakharev petitioned on behalf of the entire town about bewitchment (*porcha*).

In response to the petition, the tsar sent a new special investigator (*syshchik*), Ivan Savinov Romanchiukov, to torture them.

Conclusion of the initial round of the case: Conviction, sentencing, and execution

{*stlb. 300, l. 39*} By your sovereign order, I, your slave Ivashka Romanchiukov, took those brigands Tereshka Malakurov, Ianka Salautin, the monastic peasant Arkhipka Fadeev, and Tereshka Malakurov's wife, Olenka, and I publicly proclaimed their guilt in the presence of many people on a market day. I then ordered Tereshka and Ianka and Arkhipko executed by beheading, and Tereshka's wife, Olenka, I ordered buried in the earth (*the prescribed form of death sentence for women: burial in the earth up to their chests and being left there to die. See Documents 3.10 and 3.11*). And I have investigated in full truth and have carried out everything fully, according to your sovereign order. I am writing to you, Great Sovereign, as you ordered me, about everything that has been done, and which people will be executed. And I will remain in Lukh until you order otherwise. And for criminal witchcraft Tereshka Malakurov, Ianka Salautin, and Arkhipka Fadeev had their sentences carried out: their heads were cut off. But Tereshka's wife Olenka was buried in the earth.

Continuation of the investigation

*(The execution of these four convicts did not exhaust the enthusiasm of the townspeople or the court. One of the suspects, Fedka Vasilev—son of a respectable townsman, a shoemaker—had fled at the beginning of the inquiry but was hunted down by state authorities. The minstrel [*skomorokh*] Ianka Erokhin also reportedly left Lukh as soon as he heard he*

had been named and headed to Moscow. He was later found and executed. Meanwhile, bewitchments continued to trouble the town, and the Salautins' younger brother Mitka and their mother Nastasitsa were swept into the investigation and tortured. Igoshka Salautin, who was still in prison, also faced further rounds of torture.)

They were still languishing in prison a year later when a little girl experienced a wave of bewitchment emanating from the prison, and although most of the afflicted women had recovered in the interim, the girl's shrieking reignited their symptoms. The names that came most readily to their lips when they writhed in fits of possession were those of Fedka Vasilev and the three surviving Salautins.*{Stlb. 314, ll. 160–69}* (*Before his execution*), under torture Tereshka Malakurov incriminated the townsperson Fedka Vasilev, saying that Fedka bewitched people with him. And now Fedka sits in jail.

Now on June 23 of this year, 1659, a girl, Nastasitsa, the daughter of the Lukh townsperson Timilo Ezhov, became afflicted. That girl came with loaves of bread to the jail to the tube (trubka*, a tube or pipe that passed into the prison*). A young man approached her there, and so she left that tube and went to another tube, and as that same young man approached her, smoke and wind came out of that tube, and misery (*toska*) overtook her. When she got home, she started to tear at herself and to shriek, and she turned out to be bewitched the same way the bewitched women shriek in their affliction (*nemoch'*). They cry out that Fetka Vasilev and the widow Nastasitsa, widow of Sofonii Salautin, and her sons Igoshka and Mitka Salautin want to bewitch them all. And in the same year Fedka Vasilev and the Salautins have threatened many townspeople with their various evil plots. The townspeople request the tsar not fine them or hold them in disgrace.

And they petitioned me, your slave, in the governor's office, and gave me another petition signed by the townspeople Senka Anikeev Kuznets and Zamianka Anikeev, and I have attached the petition and sent it to you to Moscow.

Petition from the townspeople Senka Anikeev and Zamiatii Anikeev about ongoing possession inflicted by the prisoners held in the Lukh jail

{Stolb. 314, ll. 162–63 ob.} (The governor's report and a copy of the petition repeated what the governor wrote in his summary. The document was submitted by the town elders Senka Anikeev, a blacksmith, and Tomilko Zakharov, a shoemaker, and purported to represent the views of "all the Lukh townspeople." It was signed on the back by three priests and a clerk of the governor's office Ivashko Mitrofanov and by the townsmen Zamiatenka Anikeev, Matiushka Petrov, Vaska Semenov, Pashka Grigoriev, all of whom had fairly good handwriting.):

This year 1658/59, by your order, an investigator, Ivan Savinovich Romanchiukov, came to Lukh to investigate the witchcraft cases (*volshebnykh del*), and he investigated the sorcerers (*volshebniki*) Tereshka Kalinin Malakurov and his wife, Ianka Salautin, and Arshchutka (also known as Arkhipko) Fadeev. Under torture they confessed themselves to be sorcerers and that they had worked witchcraft. They said that they set loose the shrieking and tearing affliction (*skorb*) on many townsmen's wives, and they implicated their crony Fedka Vasilev Sapozhnikov. But he didn't come before the investigator, and the investigator left Lukh.

But Fedka Vasilev now sits in jail with the other sorcerers, Igonka and Mitka Salautin and their mother, the widow Nastasitsa. After the departure of the investigator, these prisoners managed to bewitch people from inside the prison. They have bewitched the townsmen's wives and children and babies and young girls. They continue to afflict them with shrieking and tearing and all kinds of afflictions, and they have bewitched the wives who had been afflicted early on all over again, and they boast about their bewitchment and they threaten us. The widow Nastasitsa bewitched my, Senka's, wife and sent the tearing affliction on her, so that she bites at herself.

Please investigate to find out who transports their hexes out of the prison, and who is in this conspiracy with them, so that we your orphans do not

utterly perish because of them and fail to pay your tsarist taxes and die a bitter death from them.

(Signed on the back in place of the petitioners by their priest confessors.)

Response from the tsar to the governor

Torture them and send a report to Moscow.

Written in Moscow, 1659, on July 24.

The remarkable testimony of Nastasitsa, mother of Ianka, Igoshka, and Mitka Salautin

{*stlb. 300, l. 69*}1659, on September 18, by order of the tsar and the Military Chancellery, the widow Nastasitsa, widow of Afonosei Salautin, was put to interrogation. And in questioning, that widow Nastasitsa said: "I never bewitched anyone of the male or female sex, not in the year 1658 nor in any other year. And my sons didn't send any tricky articles of witchcraft (*nariadnye volshebnye stat'i*) from prison, and I don't know of any witchcraft whatsoever practiced by my sons. And I don't know of any witchcraft whatsoever associated with Fedka Vasilev. But I can't fully vouch for my sons—I can't swear that they don't engage in any criminal activity—because they are of the male sex. I know what they do within the threshold of the house, but what they do out of my sight, I don't know."

New fears of retribution sparks renewed episodes of possession, 1660

{*stlb. 314, l. 192*} From Governor Mikiforko Obruttskoi (*the new governor appointed in the year 1659/60*). In this year 1660 on March 13, the townspeople of Lukh Ivashko Karpov Kuznets and Senka Pavlov Bukhalov petitioned to you and to me in Lukh.

They said that in this year during Lent, Ivashko's wife Annitsa was bewitched again. She began to grimace (*shmat'*) and shriek, and the Lukh wives who'd previously shrieked with bewitched cries, are now crying out that Ivashko's wife and Senka Bukhalov's mother the widow Ovdotitsa were

bewitched from prison by those same sorcerers Fetka Vasilev and Igoshka and Mitka and their mother the widow Nastasitsa Salautin.

And they bewitched Ivashko's wife because he, Ivashko, took the communal petition to Moscow, and they bewitched Senka Bukhalov's wife because he, when serving as a guard at the prison, locked those sorcerers up in prison, and so they released their witchcraft (*volshebstvo*) against his household in order to kill his entire household. To this petition and their testimony those Lukh townsmen signed for themselves, and they ask that the sovereign favor them, Ivashka Karpov and Senka Bukhalov, and order their petition recorded in Moscow.

(With the shoemaker's son Fedka Vasilev, the widow Nastasitsa, and her two surviving sons still in prison and undergoing ever more brutal rounds of torture, the case record abruptly ends.)

4.8 THE 1758 TRIAL OF CHAMBERLAIN PETR VASILEVICH SALTYKOV

Source: RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 1852 (parts 1–3). Several excerpts from this case were originally translated by Christine D. Worobec and John Wesley Hill in Elena B. Smilianskaia, "Fortunetellers and Sorcerers in the Service of a Russian Aristocrat of the Eighteenth Century: The Case of Chamberlain Petr Saltykov," *Russian History* 40, no. 3–4 (2013): 364–80. Those excerpts have been significantly adapted, modified, and corrected here with the permission of Brill to conform with the style of translation we have adopted for the trial materials. Due to the fact that the changes are substantial, they are not marked below. We thank Elena Smilianskaia for her transcription of the documents and her notes, which inform our commentary.

In the middle of the eighteenth century the steward Tolmachev denounced his master Petr Vasilevich Saltykov,[26] chamberlain of the court of the heir apparent, Peter Fedorovich (the future Peter III), for seeking the help of a whole host of sorcerers and fortune-tellers. According to the steward's accusation, Saltykov initially hoped to use witchcraft to placate

his wife and to seek Empress Elizabeth Petrovna's favor in allowing him to retire from state service and to spend the rest of his life on his Moscow estate. Ultimately, however, Saltykov sought the death of both his wife and mother-in-law. After having his sentence commuted from life in an isolated monastery on the White Sea to house arrest for life in one of his small villages by Emperor Peter III, he had the audacity to seek out the help of yet another witch in 1762 to gain the favor of the new empress, Catherine. Given the political and potentially treasonous nature of the case because it involved the sovereign—a *slovo i delo* matter (literally "the sovereign's word and deed")—the trial and interrogation took place in the Secret Chancellery. Documents concerning Saltykov's case continued to enter the Secret Chancellery's files as late as 1796 (after 1762 the Secret Expedition of the Senate took over the Secret Chancellery's functions) and in the end numbered approximately one thousand pages.

Saltykov was the eldest son of a prominent nobleman and brother of the diplomat Sergei Saltykov, Catherine the Great's first favorite. Catherine dismissed Petr Saltykov as an utter fool: "He was a fool in every sense of the word, and he had the most stupid physiognomy …, a pug nose, and a mouth always hanging open [and] with which he was a supreme tattler."[27] Although rich and well connected, and a member of sophisticated court society, he continued to believe unconditionally in the existence of sorcerers and witches, and he repeatedly turned to them in efforts to fix problems as they arose. In the midst of the Russian Enlightenment Saltykov was not alone among members of the Russian aristocracy in believing in the beneficial powers of magic. This fact serves as a reminder that the cultural gulf between Russian nobles and their serfs was not yet irreparable. This elite belief in magic was not unique to Russia. Even the highly influential rationalist English jurist William Blackstone, while applauding the 1736 abolition of witchcraft as a crime in England "because of the manifest abuses that its prosecution had involved," could not "deny the possibility, nay the actual existence of witchcraft and sorcery," for to do so "is at once to contradict the revealed word of God."[28]

Petr Saltykov, like many of his contemporaries, did not make clear distinctions between healing and sorcery. The lack of any precise distinction between the two practices at the time is borne out by the 1773 church dictionary put together by the catechist of Moscow University, the archpriest Petr Alekseevich Alekseev, in which a "sorcerer" is defined as being "the same as a soothsayer, fortuneteller, sorcerer, poisoner, charmer" and an "herbalist" as "someone who treats illness with grasses and herbs, or enchants grasses and roots, i.e., a charmer."[29] As in the case involving the peasant Daritsa (see Document 4.5), healer-herbalists involved in the Saltykov matter specialized in treating certain ailments or divining specific types of information. Some admitted to saying spells, while others did not. None of the alleged sorcerers besmirched the name of God or invoked the devil. A couple of them even recited prayers to God. The closest a healer-sorcerer got to committing a demonic act involved Vlas Maimist's saying incantations in a bathhouse, which was considered a liminal space between good and evil, a place where demons might lurk. And when the healer-sorcerers' magic did not work, Saltykov's servants sought out the supposedly more powerful magic of Ukrainian healers. This case beautifully

exemplifies the different witchcraft traditions of Russian and Ukrainian cultures. It also provides glimpses of exotic Finnish and Circassian magical practices.

The case against Saltykov also demonstrates the effect of Empress Anna Ioannovna's 1731 (see Document 3.16) decree identifying sorcerers or wizards as fraudulent. With repeated references to the decree the investigators succeeded in convincing those accused of witchcraft to admit to having swindled and deceived their clients, rather than to working actual sorcery. Whether their admissions of fraud were truthful, strategic, or forced through the interrogation process, such pleas allowed the accused to escape the weightier penalties associated with malefic magic, apostasy, and heresy as prescribed by the 1716 Military Statute (see the first document in 3.13). Using every type of tactic for their defense, the village healers Trofim Zherebets (a Russian) and Nastasia Ostafeva (a Ukrainian), to whom Saltykov's administrators had turned for help on their master's behalf, assured their interrogators that they had healed their fellow villagers without taking any money from them as payment, for to do so would have provided proof of their plying witchcraft as a trade. The St. Petersburg healers, in contrast, were ready to admit that their treatments brought in a specific income, without which it would have been impossible to live in an urban setting.

The records in the investigation include a summary of the case prepared by a scribe, which was meant to inform all the judges, ranging from the interrogators to the ruler, of the essence of the case. As historical scholarship would lead us to expect, face-to-face confrontations were not part of this investigation. Surprisingly, torture appears only once in the record during the interrogation of Saltykov's steward, Vasilii Kozlowskii. However, this does not mean that other members of the lower ranks were not subject to some kind of beating.

The initial case

Précis

(The précis is neither titled nor dated, but it was most likely written in December 1758 because in January 1759 Saltykov and his household servant Rogozin were already in Archangel en route to the Solovetskii Monastery.)

In the previous year 1754, when he was in the village Vasilevskoe, Saltykov ordered his two men to find a sorcerer who could murder his wife (*Princess Maria Fedorovna Solntseva-Zasekina, whom he married in 1751*); consequently, his people located a peasant for Saltykov, and Saltykov told that peasant to bewitch his wife and later also demanded that she die, as a result of which that peasant gave him a plant called cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and ordered that he administer it to his wife in her kvass (*a fermented drink made from rye bread*), which is why Saltykov

believed that if his wife drank a concoction containing that plant, she would die. Saltykov gave the plant to his man Tolmachov, and Tolmachov administered it to Saltykov's wife in a drink…. When she drank a little from the cup, she vomited violently. Salytkov's servant girl drank what was left in the cup, as a result of which she vomited bile and then blood. Both Saltykov and the peasant admitted their guilt in all of this.

While in Petersburg, this same Saltykov wrote a letter in code to his man Kozlovskii in Moscow asking that he send him a type of deadly potion that could kill his wife and his mother-in-law Princess Solntseva. Later Saltykov admitted his guilt in the matter.

Saltykov also wrote to Kozlovskii and his steward in the village asking that they find a sorceress and dispatch her to Petersburg. He testified that he ordered that the sorceress be sent to him so that Her Most Gracious Majesty would be kind to him, would give him leave to travel to Moscow (*and thereby release him from his service obligations at court*), and would pay off his debts. As a result of the letter, a "Little Russian" (*Ukrainian*) witch was found and dispatched here, but on her way to Moscow she turned back and never reached Moscow.

That same Saltykov also gave an oral command and wrote from Raninbaum (*Oranienbaum, where Saltykov served at the court of the heir apparent*) to his man Tolmachev that he find a sorcerer so that his wife would die; in response Tolmachev found some sort of cunning man. Saltykov took enchanted water and powder from that man with the intention of pouring the water and scattering the powder in places in the palace where Her Most Gracious Majesty walked so that Her Imperial Majesty would be kind to him, pay off his debts, and allow him to depart for Moscow. He scattered some of that powder in the room behind the gallery and some in Countess Mavra Shuvalova's (*a lady-in-waiting and confidante of Empress Elizabeth*) room. Moreover he ordered the professed sorcerer to give him a poisonous plant that would kill his wife. The peasant admitted all of this.

Then Saltykov wrote to Tolmachov that he should obtain from that same peasant a poisonous potion that could also kill his wife. Consequently,

Tolmachov got some mercuric chloride, which appeared to be burnt alabaster, from this peasant. Tolmachov testified that because he was afraid of God's judgment, he didn't give Saltykov's wife any of the potion.

Subsequently, Saltykov wrote to Tolmachov ordering him to find a sorcerer who could initially cause paralysis in an arm or leg, and then after some time could return it to a healthy state. Saltykov testified that he wrote this thinking that this type of bewitchment could be done to him so that he could get excused from court and be put on furlough, during which time he would be able to recover.

Saltykov and his man Kozlovskii brought to his home a professed sorcerer from Raninbaum, who gave him enchanted herbs. In order for him to experience happiness he was to wear them in his shoes, which he proceeded to do.

Saltykov and his man Kozlovskii indulged in disgusting behavior (*i.e., sodomy*) with each other.

Saltykov testified that he had debts with various ranks of people, amounting to 25,580 rubles in mortgages and promissory notes.

Salytkov's wife managed to return a diamond ring worth 2,410 rubles, which was pawned through the Secret Chancellery.

Surviving portions of the interrogations in the Secret Chancellery

Saltykov's interrogation (March 1758)

By the second day of his marriage to his wife Maria Fedorovna, his wife became hateful to him. In 1754, he sought out a sorcerer who gave him some powder. Saltykov gave that powder to Tolmachev so that he would administer it to his wife, but thereafter he didn't notice any changes in his wife. Later in Moscow he learned that his brother Sergei had been sent somewhere and thinking that he had been sent into exile, he went to some peasant's home with Tolmachov and his stableman. Upon entering the hut, Saltykov told the peasant to employ water to divine whether his brother Sergei Saltykov was happy or in trouble. The peasant did the water divination, but he, Saltykov, can't remember what he said. In 1756, Saltykov

was already in St. Petersburg and again told Tolmachev, "I want to kill my wife, so find me the sort of person who could kill my wife and who could initially give her an elevated temperature."

Last year in 1757, Tolmachev came to Saltykov and informed him that on Liteinaia Street there is someone who aids people through his work and pays visits to (*i.e., does magic for*) many people in the palace. People call him Ignatei Nikitich. He, Saltykov, wanting to see that man for himself and to talk with him, went with Tolmachev to that man's dwelling in the evening and upon entering the hut said to the peasant: "Hello there, little peasant, I need to talk with you." Having uttered those words, he, Saltykov, went with the peasant into another part of that hut and said to that peasant alone, "Since you know how to practice sorcery, please make me something so that my wife would die. Also make me something so that Her Gracious Majesty will be kind to me and give me leave." And the peasant said to him that he would help him as requested, only he did not at the moment have any prepared drugs and herbs for his wife, and that he, Saltykov, should come to him again and he would send two vials with him. The next day Saltykov dispatched Tolmachev, and he received the two vials, one with some kind of water, the other—with powder, and in accordance with that peasant's order he was to throw the vials into the river and to sprinkle the powder in the palace where the sovereign walks, but the vials broke.

Saltykov, nevertheless, received the powder. After sending the powder, the peasant told Saltykov, "I see many people at the palace," but who exactly he did not say. Saltykov had the powder for no more than two days when he rode to the palace, but he doesn't remember what month and day, only that there was a formal reception at the palace on that day. Having arrived at the palace, he went into the front room, poured some of that powder out of the paper onto his hand, and squeezed it in his hand. When he entered the door guarded by sergeants in grenadier uniforms and from which Her Imperial Majesty usually deigns to enter the gallery, he sprinkled the powder onto the floor as he thought about the peasant's promise that it would make Her Most Gracious Highness kind toward him.

Then he asked for poison so that either his arm or leg would temporarily cramp up. Saltykov subsequently wrote to Tolmachev from Moscow ordering him to visit that same peasant Nikitin so that the latter would kill his wife, for which he would give him thirty rubles, but he did not receive a reply. Later, Saltykov visited the peasant, and the latter gave him a lump, explaining that it was mercuric chloride (*which was used to treat syphilis*), and told him to give it to his wife, but nothing happened to her. Thereafter he dispatched Tolmachev to Nikitin multiple times, but to no avail as Tolmachev said that he did not find him at home. Saltykov got angry with Nikitin and turned to his man Kozlovskii.

Kozlovskii found someone named Maimist who said that he could make people kind; then Kozlovskii said to Maimist that when he plays cards, he doesn't know how to enchant the cards so that he can win money. Maimist replied to Kozlovskii that he doesn't know how to cast that type of spell, but that there is a retired soldier who lives nine versts from Raninbaum on the seashore and who knows how to enchant cards and other things. He, Kozlovskii, rode from Maimist's place together with the above-mentioned stableman to the soldier's home.

(There is an interruption in the document at this point, but it is clear from a later record that the soldier promised to enchant salt and said that the salt should be mixed with drink in order to make people kind.)

The soldier said that he had helped the chamberlain Lev Aleksandrovich Naryshkin gain His Imperial Highness's favor and that even today His Imperial Highness very much favors Naryshkin and that Naryshkin up to the present day prays to God on his, the soldier's, behalf. (*Under torture Kozlovskii conceded that they had not talked about Naryshkin.*) Upon Kozlovskii's arrival home, he ate food to which the enchanted salt had been added and wore the herb that he received from Maimist. Since he did not receive any benefit from the herb, he discarded it.

However, before Christmas 1757, Saltykov asked Kozlovskii to send the stableman to fetch Maimist. When Maimist arrived, they took him to the bathhouse and presented him with Saltykov's request that he help him get released from service. Maimist fetched an herb, whispered something in

Finnish over it and he, Saltykov, left the bathhouse with a small rag containing the herb and ordered that Maimist be given twenty-five kopecks. Saltykov put the herb under his heel and walked around with it and asked for his leave to Moscow. Only when he wasn't allowed to go to Moscow and he saw that the herb was not helping him did he discard it.

Then, at Saltykov's request, Kozlovskii searched for a fortune-teller in Little Russia. Upon his return to St. Petersburg, Kozlovskii reported to Saltykov that he had found two fortune-tellers for him—the peasants Nazar and Aleksei from Vasilevskoe, the village closest to Saltykov's estate. Nazar had given him a gray root and Aleksei some white wax. They instructed that Saltykov wear that gray root and wax around his neck so that he would be allowed to retire to Moscow. Saltykov wore them until they came to arrest him and then he discarded them in the privy. Besides that, Saltykov wrote some encoded characters for Kozlovskii, telling him to find people who could murder his wife and mother-in-law. He often quarreled with this wife and acknowledged that she often challenged him.

Tolmachev's interrogation

On March 9, 1758, about how he had sprinkled powder (*intended for Saltykov's wife*) and how she and the servant girl drank it, making them vomit. After Easter 1755, the Saltykovs arrived in St. Petersburg, as did Tolmachev and Kozlovskii; they moved into Lunin's home and Saltykov asked them to find a sorcerer who could make his wife die. Finally, through an intermediary, they found Ignatii Nikitich, who lived on Liteinaia Street and was well known for healing the French sickness (*syphilis*). They went to see him and bowed before him. Tolmachev complained that he had the French sickness, but after examining his secret member (*penis*), Ignatii said that what he had was minor and definitely not the French disease. They went to the tavern to celebrate, and then he, Tolmachev, remembered his lord and consulted the peasant about how to resolve the problem of killing his master's wife. Saltykov subsequently traveled on a sleigh, with Tolmachev on the footboard, to see Ignatii Nikitich. Later they, Saltykov and Ignatii, talked alone, and the next day Tolmachev was dispatched to fetch the vials. He got the mercuric chloride from Nikitich. Following

Saltykov's orders, he gave it to Saltykov's wife. At that time she was living in St. Petersburg while Saltykov lived in Raninbaum. According to Tolmachev, the vial did not break but was thrown into the Fontanka River. The rest of the testimony was the same as Saltykov's.

Vasilii Kozlovskii's interrogation

He first went to Maimist for treatment and he helped him, gave him some herbs, which he brewed, but later he asked Maimist to give him something so that the household serfs would be nice to him and not beat him (*because, as stated later in the documents, he had had sex with the master*). Maimist gave him some herbs, ordered him to carry them in his boot, but because they didn't make people love him he ended up throwing the grasses into the canal. Then Saltykov arrived from Raninbaum and asked who Kozlovskii saw for stomach problems. Having learned about Maimist, Saltykov asked, "Could that Maimist fix it so that they would agree to my request and allow me to depart for Moscow?" Kozlovskii didn't tell Saltykov about his lack of success with the grasses. The groomsman had been sent to fetch Maimist, and then they learned from Maimist about the soldier who supposedly could enchant playing cards. When they arrived at the soldier's home nine versts from Raninbaum, the soldier said that he knows how to enchant playing cards, but now he is ill and cannot cast the spell. Then he, Kozlovskii, complained once again about his stomach and the soldier gave him some lumps of rock salt: Maimist picked up a handful of the salt lumps, but he, Kozlovskii, did not know what words he said over that salt. Then that soldier wrapped the salt in a small rag, gave it to him, and ordered him "to put the salt in food and eat it so that you will feel better." Subsequently, the soldier told him about Naryshkin. Then, at Christmastime in 1757, the groomsman delivered Maimist to Saltykov's home. Kozlovskii ensconced him in the bathhouse and asked him if he could help his master obtain a leave of absence, then summoned Saltykov to the bathhouse. There Maimist gave Saltykov some herbs. Having taken them, Saltykov returned to his chamber and ordered Kozlovskii to give Maimist twenty-five kopecks and to drive him home.

In 1756, Kozlovskii fulfilled Saltykov's request to find a fortune-teller on his Little Russian estate in the village Viazovoe. The bailiff of Viazovoe said

that he knew of a female fortune-teller who lives about a hundred versts from Viazovoe in a Little Russian parish. A peasant was dispatched to bring the fortune-teller, and upon her arrival she was asked whether she could work it for our master so that Her Most Gracious Majesty would favor him and give him money. The fortune-teller replied that she was able to fix it for their master so that Her Most Gracious Majesty would reward him with money and allow him to depart for his village, but that she was un[able] to make Her Most Gracious Majesty favor him. Beyond that, Kozlovskii found near the village of Vasilevskoe two men, the peasants Nazar and Aleksei, who he, Kozlovskii, asked to do something to ensure that his master would be allowed to depart for his Moscow home when he made that request, and those peasants Nazar and Aleksei separately told him, when they were with him alone, that they could do that. Nazar went out into the yard and then came back into the hut, and gave him a small gray root of *serinka* (*a type of apple*) for his master to wear around his neck. Aleksei had also gone out to the yard. Back in the hut, he gave him, Kozlovskii, some white wax, saying the same words as had Nazar. Upon his, Kozlovskii's, return to St. Petersburg, he gave everything to his lord, who was by himself, and told him everything written above. Having tied the small root and wax in a ribbon, his master wore them round his neck. Kozlovskii also remembered that his lord gave him a small root and wax, which Saltykov had found in Tolmachev's pocket and told him to discard them, but Kozlovskii hid them under the roof of the dwelling.

The interrogation of the peasant Ignatii Nikitin (also known as Nikitich) of the village Tsarskoe, who lives on Liteinaia Street in St. Petersburg, on March 9, 1758

His father, a sacristan from Velikie Luki, died thirty years ago. Illiterate, Ignatii Nikitin has lived in St. Petersburg for more than thirty years. He made a living catching fish, while being a resident initially in his own home on the St. Petersburg side on Ruzheinaia Street for twenty years and then, after selling his home to Likhachev, in various rented apartments. As a person without a(*n internal*) passport during the 1743 revision (*a type of*

census), he was sent to Kronshtadt to work on building a canal.[30] Then he was transferred to the village Tsarskoe where he was registered as a brickmaker, but around 1752, he was released by Andrei Udalov, the bailiff of the village Tsarskoe, to do domestic work in Udalov's St. Petersburg home in the Liteinaia part of the city in the parish of St. Simeon the Prophet. He, Nikitin, quickly came down with a fever and some mysterious man, Matvei Grigorev, living in that Udalov's home, gave him a recipe for boiled hayseed, and the fever dissipated. Thereafter, he, Nikitin, started to advise only lowly born people who came to him for that recipe and for that treatment people gave him ten kopecks and after they got better treated him to vodka. He also treated lowly born people for the French disease, but who exactly he can't remember except maybe only one—Colonel Syslov's man Ivan.

Beyond that, Nikitin told the story of how Colonel Vasilii Ryzumskii's barber (*a type of self-taught surgeon*) brought Tolmachev to him. Tolmachev asked that he be treated for the French disease, but Nikitin said that what he had wasn't anything serious. "I both heal such illnesses and do good deeds, and even visit many people in the palace. Come to me afterwards, my lad, so that I can give you some medicine." *(Tolmachev replied:)* "I told him that I did not have the time now to do so." Tolmachev brought Nikitin and Zamiatin some vodka that he had bought in the tavern. Subsequently, Saltykov wished to meet him, Nikitin. Once they were alone, Saltykov told him: "I heard that you know how to conduct sorcery, so please do something so that my wife would die, and initially, when she is ill, also make me so pleasant that Her Most Gracious Majesty is kind to me and allows me to go to Moscow." Deceiving Saltykov and wanting to get money from Saltykov, Nikitin said: "I will aid you in this; only at the moment I don't have a potion or herbs prepared for your wife. Send your man to me or come yourself, if you please, and I will send you two vials and some powder with some drug. You will throw one of the vials on one bank of the river and the second on the other bank and you will thereby be released to go to Moscow. And sprinkle the powder in the palace where the sovereign deigns to walk, and if the sovereign walks across that powder, she will be kind to you." Then, not saying anything more to Saltykov, he, Nikitin, left

the hut. The next day in the morning Tolmachev came to him, and he, Nikitin, having taken from the second section of the sideboard two vials and the paper containing powder, gave them to him. At the same time, he gave Tolmachev a plaster to affix to his secret member…. (*There is an interruption in sequence here.*) And Saltykov took the powder, saying to him, "Well, old man, if you make the sovereign kind and I am released to Moscow, I will give you thirty rubles." He, Nikitin, told Saltykov not to worry: "I'll do it. I visit many people in the palace." Saltykov took leave of him and left the hut. Then Tolmachev came and asked for the means to make the mistress die in 1757, for which he would pay thirty rubles. Nikitin gave him the plaster, saying that it was mercuric chloride.

In the summer of 1757, Tolmachev said that his master had summoned Nikitin to his home and asked for potions that would kill his wife and make the sovereign kind and allow him leave to go to Moscow. Nikitin gave him one vial and two pieces of paper with powder, and in the papers containing the powders he put some grated salt from Perm and grass called *biakovitsa* (*probably* Stáchys officinális*, known as hedgenettle or betony*). As he was doing so and deceiving people that he had knowledge of sorcery, he said the words: "Awake God …, naming that man, … not as a man but as God." He also said, "Remember him God … and all of his gentleness … said King David." … Nikitin said that he smokes tobacco, but did not recite any spells and did not and does not know any sorcery. He said that he told Saltykov and his man Tolmachev that he visits many people in the palace only because he had treated the widow Daria Volodimerova Maslova's little boy's headache and scabs with warm cow's butter and turpentine, but he did not visit anyone else and didn't minister to anyone else in the palace. The reason that Tolmachev said that he, Nikitin, helps people, is because he has indeed treated people for fever and also the French disease, but he has not treated anyone for other illnesses. Thereafter Nikitin explained the nature of the herbs and fourteen lumps (of burned alum, plaster, alabaster, and couperose) that had been seized from him, but other than these medicines, he had no poisons of any kind.

(In the meantime, on March 13, 1758, Maimist and the soldier with herbs and other substances were apprehended.)

Gavril Ivanov Sarychov's interrogation

The seventy-six-year-old retired soldier Gavril Ivanov Sarychov had been a sailor for twenty-five years but has been retired already seventeen years because of old age; he lives on a farmstead seventeen versts from Peterhof; earns a living from the boot and shoe trade, sale of mushrooms and berries, and firewood, and has also treated various ranks of people, whose names he can't remember, for the French disease and stomach ailments with roots, and assorted drugs. In 1757, Kozlovskii came to him and complained of stomach pains, and Sarychov took some salt and quietly incanted the following words on Kozlovskii's behalf:

> On the sea, on the ocean, on the isle of Buyan, there stands a rock, and inside the rock a hare, and inside the hare a duck, inside the duck … [an egg], and from the egg comes light for the slave Vasilii, and I, the slave Gavril, incant over this salt and remove [the spell] … (*the original document is damaged here*). Save, Lord, your slave Vasilii from all present and future sickness, and as the arrow shoots, the rock breaks, and the devil is killed, so I, the slave Gavril, remove sickness and sorrow from Vasilii. Fall sickness to the ground, and from the ground into the water, onto the white-hot stone, and from the stone onto the wild winds, into the dark woods, from the dry wood onto the aspen or the b[irch?] … or into the putrid well, and I remove it for eternity, unto death and the grave.

Having said the spell over the salt and having wrapped the salt in a rag, he, Sarychov, gave Kozlovskii the salt and told him to put it in his food. For that he received thirty kopecks. And he said that he aided Aleksei Aleksandrov Koev (not Naryshkin), his imperial majesty's (*future emperor Peter III's*) groom, and that he prayed to God on his behalf. He said that having deceived Kozlovskii into believing that he knew how to help people and wanting to receive more money from Kozlovskii, he didn't treat Koev with anything … or say any spells for Koev. He also didn't do anything for Naryshkin.

As for the spell, he, Sarychov, learned it when he was a peasant on Prince Petr Ivanov Prozorovskii's estate in the hamlet of Bornikovo, which was

part of the town Ryza's village Dolgoliadia, from Sidor Savostianov, another peasant of that hamlet, who died a long time ago.

As for Kozlovskii's claim that he, Sarychov, knows how to incant over cards, Kozlovskii said that because in the year 1757, a barge hauler, whose name, patronymic, and surname he can't remember (but who was employed at Raninbaum), came to him and asked him to incant over cards so that he could win some money. He, Sarychov, told the barge hauler to pick any card and the hauler gave him the six of diamonds. Taking the card, Sarychov quietly pronounced the following words over it: "on the sea, on the ocean, on the isle of Buyan, there stands a rock, and inside that rock a hare, and in that hare a duck, and inside that duck an egg that gives off a light for (the name of the intended), and like an arrow … the stone breaks and the devil is killed, so will he (naming the barge hauler) win and beat everyone he plays." Then he, Sarychov, gave the barge hauler the card and told him that he "could play with whomever you want as you will start winning money." And the barge hauler took the card and after he bought him, Sarychev, some vodka in a tavern close to his home and gave him a cup, Sarychov left him, but he, Sarychov, doesn't know if the barge hauler won any money as a result of his spell because the barge hauler no longer came to visit. And he, Sarychov, wanted to enchant cards for Kozlovskii, but he, Sarychov, wasn't able to because he was sick at the time. Kozlovskii asked him lightheartedly where he had learned the spell. He, Sarychov, learned it from his father Savostianov.

The other people of various ranks whom Kozlovskii identified were among the most lowly born. He, Sarychev, doesn't know their names. They came to him to be treated, and he treated them. He treated the French disease, stomach, and other types of ailments with herbs and roots and other things, as well as the spell mentioned above, just as he had treated Kozlovskii. However, he did not have poisons and harmful potions at home. Nor did he ever poison or kill anyone or inflict any kind of wasting disease on anyone through spells. He also doesn't know any type of sorcery or heresy, nor does he know any sorcerers, heretics, and fortune-tellers.

More about the seized roots—he used six of them, but doesn't know their names—to treat diarrhea. More about the four gray pieces which he used to treat the French disease, eyes, and stomach: in one pot there are lumps of salt over which he said the above spell for a variety of illnesses; he administered the potion in water and in kvass. There is an herb, the name of which he can't remember, in a vial, which he applied to wounds. He administered one piece of white ammonium chloride in drink for chest pains, one piece of white sugar in the eyes, and one piece of white so-called falcon's salt in the eyes. There are two pieces of yellow so-called devil's shit (*ferula asafoetida*) that he used to fumigate cattle. There is a small glass of alum, vitriol, and green copper which he prescribed for wounds and used in treating the French disease; an empty small glass that contained camphor which he spread on legs and arms for muscle pains and swellings; and seven pebbles and a pig's tooth, over which he recited the above spell, which he used to rub the body.

Vlas Efimov Maimist's interrogation

Around sixty years of age, he is by origin a Russian and Orthodox. In 1756, Petr Saltykov's man Kozlovskii received from him some herb of the Birthgiver (*reference to the Mother of God*) (*possibly Thymus serpullum*) to be boiled in water for stomach pains. In 1757, Kozlovskii came asking for a potion to make the other serfs love him and refrain from beating him, which Maimist didn't have. Instead, Maimist gave him some of that same herb of the Birthgiver in a pouch for him to place in his shoe or boot under his foot, when he walked, so that people would begin to love him. Kozlovskii took the herb from him, and Efimov didn't speak with him again, as Kozlovskii went back home. He, Maimist, learned this method from a peasant fisherman in Koporsk district fifteen years ago.

In the fall of 1757, Kozlovskii came to him, Maimist, again, complaining that he hadn't received any benefit from the herb and asked for something stronger. He, Maimist, gave him a pouch of the same herb of the Birthgiver and this time told him to carry that herb in his pocket, so that both people and his lord would love him. Later Kozlovskii asked him "to incant over

cards so that I can win some money," but he, Maimist, told him that the retired sailor Gavril Sarychov knew how to do that and informed him of where Sarychov lived.

Before Christmas of 1757, Saltykov's groom came and asked him, Maimist, if he could fix it so that his master would be allowed to go to Moscow. "And if you can, we will ride to see my master." Wishing to receive money from Saltykov, he, Maimist, deceived the man and told him that he was able to do so. Later they brought him to St. Petersburg. They took him to the bathhouse, where Kozlovskii first asked him whether he could make this happen, but later Saltykov himself came and asked if he could make it possible for him to be excused to Moscow. Wishing to get money from Saltykov, he, Maimist, deceived him by telling him that he could do it. He gave him a small rag containing the herb of the Birthgiver and over that herb he whispered in Russian, and not in Finnish, "Lord Jesus Christ, our God." He gave the enchanted herb to Saltykov and ordered him to place it in his shoe under his heel and walk about. Saltykov took the rag with the herb and left the bathhouse, while Kozlovskii gave him twenty-five kopecks and ordered him to return home. Nothing more happened. As for the herbs that were taken from him, vervain is used for cuts (*which, according to legend, was applied to Christ's crucifixion wounds to stem the bleeding*), the brewed herb of the Birthgiver for stomach ailments, and twigs of juniper berries are used for cleaning crockery.

Trofim Vasilev Zherebets's interrogation

In the village Vasilevskoe in Kolomensk District the home of the peasant Trofim Vasilev Zherebets was searched but no herbs, roots, powders, or letters were found. Under questioning Zherebets said that after some training he had become a horse doctor. For five years he had treated peasants and their wives upon request for internal, heart ailments, as well as external lacerations, for which he did not know the cause, for free! He searched fields and meadows for the herb known as cuckooflower for heart problems, which he put in kvass for them to drink. For wounds he applied

the herb known as bear's paw (*Heracleum villosum*). And people sometimes benefited from both those herbs.

And in the fall of the previous [year] 1754, when his master Saltykov and his wife visited Vasilevskoe, Saltykov summoned him to his room and told him to bewitch his wife. Zherebets told his master that he would give him some herbs. The next day he brought his master some paper containing the herb called cuckooflower and directed him to administer it to his wife in kvass. A week later, his master and his men came to his home and asked him to use water to predict whether his wife would give birth to a girl or boy. Three days later, Zherebets visited his master, and Saltykov asked him to give him something so that his wife would die. Once again he gave him some cuckooflower and he deceived him by saying that if his wife were to drink that herb, she would definitely die. Later, Tolmachev and others came to him several times and asked for herbs that would kill the landlady, but he administered only cuckooflower. He never engaged in sorcery and divination. He dispensed the herb not with the intention of killing anyone, but only because he was afraid of his master.

Besides that he remembered that ten years ago he had treated Teleliui for swelled testicles by giving him the herb sedge, which was to be brewed and drunk. Furthermore, he remembered that his master had summoned him and said: "You give herbs and roots that have no effect whatsoever, and you know they are the wrong ones, for which you should be flogged with the knout." He, Zherebets, told his master that it was God's will and that God would protect him. The landowner told him that he should give him more herbs to make his mother-in-law die, and Zherebets deceived his master by saying that he would give him that type of herb. Zherebets told his master that he should dispatch one of his people to his mother-in-law's home and sprinkle the herb in the rooms located on her porch so that as soon as she goes out onto that porch, she will quickly die. Two or three days later (he doesn't remember exactly), the landowner dispatched Teleliui to Solntseva in the village Verenka with a letter for his mother-in-law. Zherebets gave Teleliui paper containing the powder of that cuckooflower herb.

Mikhail Teleliui's interrogation

On May 9, 1758, they interrogated the newly apprehended servant Mikhail Teleliui. The mother-in-law Solntseva lived on her estate of Verenka in Kolomensk district, which was thirty versts from Vasilevskoe. Saltykov had sent her by way of Teleliui ground herbs from the sorcerer Zherebets and told Teleliuii that upon his arrival he should sprinkle the herbs in the rooms located on the porch, but didn't tell him the reason. Not wanting to harm anyone with the herb, Teleliui threw the packet away. He also remembered that they did seek to determine the sex of the landowner's baby by means of water divination. But he refused to admit anything about the landlady's poisoning.

Stepan Antonov's interrogation (interspersed with excerpts of the interrogations of Maria Samoidaika and Nastasia Ostafeva)

Thirty-year-old Antonov (*the steward of the village Viazovoe*) was a free Little Russian and literate; before serving Saltykov he was in Petr Sergeevich Dolgorukii's service. He said that in 1757 he had received a letter ordering him to find a female fortune-teller "who was capable of making Saltykov and his wife live in harmony, and making his wife obey him and not get angry at his man Kozlovskii; and arranging it so that HER MOST GRACIOUS MAJESTY would be kind to him and forgive him his money debts and permit him to retire to his village;" and asked that the fortune-teller visit him, Saltykov, in St. Petersburg.

In September 1757, Antonov received a letter from Kozlovskii, saying that he had received the herb, but that the herb wasn't working, and his master was getting angry with him. Then, Antonov related an incident that occurred at a well in the village of Viasovoe, where at night he came across a peasant with a cudgel and asked him why he was walking around late at night so armed. The peasant Pavlovskoi explained that he had gone to the well and scooped up a pail full of water. A slice of bread, into which a needle on a long piece of thread was stuck, had fallen into that pail. He then lowered the bread and needle back down into the well and was standing there to see if someone would come and retrieve the bread from the well, but nobody came. He, Antonov, told Pavlovskoi that he should continue to

watch over the well and not go anywhere. In the morning he brought the Circassian peasant woman Maria Samodaika to Antonov and reported that she had taken the bread out of the well. She explained under questioning that she had tossed the bread with the needle, in order to stimulate her breast milk, as she had nothing else to feed her child. Her daughter-in-law, a Circassian vagrant (*which meant that she did not have the required internal passport*), had taught her to do this. For this they flogged her with the lash.

The letter that Saltykov sent Antonov in August 1757, in which he asked that the Little Russian Nastasia be dispatched to him, was partly in code. Antonov replied in code: "I, your slave, rode out to see that woman and asked her. She said that all of them were troubling themselves in vain and that she had done what she had promised to do for Vasilevich Saltykov." Nastasia: "I don't know what more I can do. His wife still loves him. Only the older woman (*Saltykov's mother-in-law*) appears to be confused (*i.e., bewitched*), as do many people from her side of the family. And you were to have been bewitched but Maria Fedorovna (*Saltykov's wife*) asked that I not do so. I cannot do anything more but I believe that everything is OK." Antonov: "I, your slave, rode around to find another fortune-teller. People told me to travel two hundred versts beyond the border, but the woman I found said that no one will let you retire this year, that there was no one at court, and that if Saltykov's people want to write her in future they should write to the Narskiis, whom she visits from time to time."

When Antonov was asked about that letter, he said that he had deceived Saltykov and had made everything up. He had not heard any of these words from Nastasia or anything about a foreign fortune-teller.

In the interrogation Antonov added that when Saltykov had made him steward of Viasovoe, he ordered him not to drink and not to steal, but only to carry out his will. First and foremost, he was to find him a female fortune-teller without getting involved in the matter and ask her to do everything on the spot where he found her. However, if she was not able to do that, then he was to send her to his, Saltykov's, home in Moscow and to refer to her as his sister. Kozlovskii was the one who was to drive the fortune-teller to Saltykov in St. Petersburg. Saltykov gave Antonov two

rubles for the trip and ordered him to write in code. Then he discussed this plan with Kozlovskii. Kozlovskii pointed out that Saltykov regards him favorably and doesn't hide anything from him. "Kozlovskii ordered that I search for a female fortune-teller and that I not be afraid." But Antonov, upon his arrival in the village in June 1756 before St. Peter's Day, was busy with business matters, including inventorying households, and was present during the mowing of the hay, but at the end of July he received a letter in code from Saltykov in which he ordered him immediately to go out and search for a female fortune-teller.

Knowing about Nastasia in the village of Vasilkovo, who treated heart and other ailments, he rode out to her and gave her all Saltykov's requests and asked if she could do all that from afar, right here in the village of Vasilkovo. Nastasia replied that she would look into why his lord and his lady were not living harmoniously. However, she couldn't do anything unless the lord was present in the village. She said that his lord should come visit her and that she would question him in detail, and also he, Antonov, should write to his lord asking him to give her some remuneration for her work. Nastasia told him that she had done similar work for Roman Lukianovich Strutinskii, for which he would forever pray to God for her and would not abandon her because of what she had done for him. He, Antonov, did not question her about this.

Within two months, a letter from Saltykov was delivered to him, Antonov, ordering him to invite "that individual" (*i.e., Nastasia*) to come and live at his home. And he traveled once again to Nastasia's home and made all the requests. She told him that she "would pray to God and if God helps her, then his master and his wife would begin to live in harmony, his wife would obey him, and Her Most Gracious Majesty would be so kind to him and would take pity on him. What more does he want? Her disfavor?! I have worked hard and have not received anything for my labors." In fulfilling the demands in Saltykov's letter, he, Antonov, had arrived in the village Vasilkovo on two horses and gave Nastasia a third horse—a mare—and a sheepskin coat and in doing so asked Nastasia about his lord's request and said that he would be going to him. What did she want related to his

lord?" She answered: "Tell his lord that I will not go without payment and I will not do anything."

Antonov related all of this to Kozlovskii, who responded: "She is all lies and the mistress is quarreling with his master now just as much as she did before, and he can't do anything to placate her. It is so unbearable for everyone that no one wants to live in the house. The master doesn't know what to do with his wife, and since the gracious sovereign hasn't taken pity on him, his master told Kozlovskii to order him, Antonov, to visit that female fortune-teller again and ask her for some herbs so that he could poison the mistress." He, Antonov, told Kozlovskii that he would not ask that female fortune-teller for those kinds of herbs and that he didn't think that she would give him any.

Nevertheless, at the beginning of 1757, having returned from Moscow, Antonov once again was forced to visit the fortune-teller Nastasia and ask for herbs to make his master and mistress live in harmony as well as herbs that could poison the mistress. Nastasia replied that she would not give him any herbs that might poison the mistress and that she did not want to damn her soul and that she does not know how to do anything malevolent. However, she would provide herbs that would make his master live in harmony with his wife solely for his master, saying that Kozlovskii does not know how to boil those herbs properly. He, Antonov, asked her how to boil them effectively. Nastasia told him, "You need to take a black chemise your lady has worn and wash the underarm area, where she sweated, in clean water. Then boil this herb in that water. Having boiled it, have her drink this herbal concoction instead of tea, and his lordship should also drink it. And once they have drunk three cups each, God will send them harmony, and her ladyship will no longer be angry with Kozlovskii and will be kind to him." She declared that the herbs were dried, but he doesn't know what they are called. He, Antonov, gave Nastasia fifty kopecks. He took the herbs, wrapped them in paper, and stamped them with his seal. From Nastasia's he traveled to the village Viasovoe and from there he wrote Kozlovskii, telling him how to boil the herbs, according to Nastasia's instructions, and how she ordered that they be administered to the master and mistress so that they

would live together harmoniously. He sent all the herbs and a letter to his master.

In June 1757, Kozlovskii appeared in Viazovoe and demanded that they find the female fortune-teller because her herbs were ineffective. Antonov fitted out a cart, hitched two horses to it, made out a passport for Nastasia in the name Avdotia for her to travel to St. Petersburg, and gave Kozlovskii seventeen rubles to give to Nastasia. But Nastasia took ill on the road and she was forced to return home. After giving her two rubles and a mare, Antonov did not see Nastasia again.

Nastasia Ostafeva's interrogation

She is thirty years old, her husband is a Little Russian, of the Lubenskii Little Russian militia squadron's (under the command of Lieutenant Semchasko) village of Vasilkovo. Having learned from her late father, for twelve years she had been treating Little Russians and their wives, upon their request, for internal, heart ailments as well as any woman experiencing protracted and painful difficulties in labor. And when oxen chafed their necks on the yoke, she treated them. And she treated other wounds for no remuneration other than perhaps some bread. Following what her father taught her, she searched fields and meadows for the herb known in Little Russian as *gorchenets* (*equivalent unknown*), administering it in water or cabbage soup for heart ailments. And for painful, extended childbirth she administered the herb known as *prosviriak* (*possibly G. Lavathera*) in water and other things. And for oxen wounds she caught moles in the fields, killed them, and dried them, and applied the dried moles. People sometimes benefited from these herbs and moles, and sometimes oxen were healed of their wounds. And she did not treat anyone with anything other than those herbs.

As for Strypilskii, she acknowledged only that she had treated his heart ailment with the herb *gorchenets*. She upheld everything else concerning Antonov, adding that on the road she had confessed to Kozlovskii, so that he would let her go, that she didn't know how to do anything and didn't know anything. Only to deceive Antonov, she said all that, and in the Secret Chancellery she affirmed that she did not have any knowledge of witchcraft.

When asked about the herbs, Nastasia responded that everything she did, other Little Russian women in her village do something similar for their own and others' needs, and that she never practiced true sorcery and fortune-telling, and she doesn't know any sorcerers and fortune-tellers.

Sentences

End of 1757

(The Secret Chancellery asks that an imperial decision be made to torture Saltykov and send him to the Solovetskii Monastery in perpetuity, and transfer his property, after paying off his debts, to his wife and son.

After being subjected to corporal punishment, Saltykov's accomplices were sent off to serve in the military, the "sorcerers" to distant exile, and the "witch" Nastasia Ostafeva to labor in a monastery for life. Trofim Vasilev Zherebets and Vlas Efimov Maimist died in the Secret Chancellery in the middle of December 1758, before the sentencing took place.

Thanks to Empress Elizabeth Petrovna's intervention, Petr Saltykov escaped corporal punishment, but his sentence was nevertheless harsh:) he was to be exiled to the Solovetskii Monastery, where he was to held for the remainder of his life and not allowed to leave the monastery, … under armed guard, where he was to learn to repent his crimes before God." (*He was stripped of all his ranks, and his movable and immovable property, after payment of his debts, was transferred to the custody of his wife Maria Fedorovna and his underage son Vasilii.*)

December 1761 edict in the name of Peter III

Dispatch Saltykov from the Solovetskii Monastery to the smallest of his villages that is able to maintain and keep him under heavy guard. Do not allow him to leave that village, nor let any outsiders visit him, nor permit him to write letters. Let him live in this village decently. He is never to leave it or bring his serfs to ruin.

Trial of Agrafena Varfolomeeva for witchcraft

(*On June 26, 1764, now into the reign of Catherine II, Petr Chertorylskii, the new bailiff of the village Viazovoe, reported that his master was involved in witchcraft shenanigans once again. He informed the authorities that:*) Saltykov through his serf woman Agrafena Varfolomeeva, is committing heresy (*witchcraft*) by trying to gain Her Imperial Majesty's favor. (*That report resulted in the trial of the Ukrainian witch in the Senate's Secret Expedition*:)

In the year 1762 in the first days of October, the woman Agrafena stood in the yard totally naked with her hair down. Unknown types of herbs lay beside her, while opposite her lay a pot of water. She stood there staring at the stars and whispered spells over the water. About two weeks later, this woman was walking in the manor house's yard when Chertorylskii asked her whether her husband would be returning from Moscow soon. She said that he would return soon with a decree releasing their master from house arrest. She knew that her magic would win the favor of HER IMPERIAL MAJESTY for Saltykov. It was also her magic that made Saltykov dispatch her husband to Moscow.

Sentence

(Catherine II's 1765 sentence (written in her own hand), after the entreaties of Saltykov's relatives, Field Marshal Petr Vasilevich Saltykov and Cavalier Count Petr Semenovich Saltykov):

(1) Do not punish the informer Petr Chertorylskii, but draft him into the army if he is fit; if he is unfit, transfer him along with his family and all his possessions to Orenburg for resettlement, having equipped him with as much money for the road and for his resettlement as you see fit, for his information was, as the case demonstrates, on the whole, correct. (*Military service for the whistleblower would have involved service for life, a fate so undesirable for lower-class individuals that relatives and community members in villages resorted to funeral services and repasts for departing recruits.)*

(2) Have the sorceress Agrafena and her husband interrogated, as far as possible, by the Military and the Belgorodskaia State Chancelleries, and upon interrogation punish her harshly so that henceforth she will not tempt simple folk with unrealistic delusions and not terrify them with absurd fables.

(3) Inform prisoner Petr Saltykov of our decree, so that he will experience pangs of conscience for his crimes, live quietly and peacefully, ask God for absolution of his sins, and not seek out such impious and ineffective methods such as that woman's dissolute magic. If henceforth there is an accusation against him, then, having incurred Our displeasure again, he will assuredly be exiled to a monastery in the most remote corner of Our empire.

(4) In place of his old guardsmen, send a trustworthy non-commissioned officer and as many soldiers as needed so that they can watch him more closely and prevent him from committing impious deeds.

Saltykov's Fate

(*Petr Saltykov lived under house arrest until 1796. After having succeeded to the throne, Paul I, signed an authorization on December 11, 1796,*) to release the former Chamberlain Petr Saltykov from custody and because of both his old age and ill health to leave him in the care of his son, his Privy Councillor and Chamberlain [Vasilii Petrovich] Saltykov.

4.9 THE 1764–65 CASE AGAINST THE PEASANT EKATERINA IVANOVA FOR DABBLING IN WITCHCRAFT

Sources: Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Iaroslavskoi oblasti, f. 197, op. 1, dela 4018, 3973; reproduced in Smilianskaia, *Volshebstvo*, 89–97. We thank Elena B. Smilianskaia for her notes, which inform our commentary.

In 1764, two young peasant women in the village Tishino, Iaroslavl District and Province, purportedly in a state of unconsciousness shrieked out the name of the peasant widow Katerina Ivanova. Believing Katerina to be the individual who had bewitched these women by implanting demons in them, the women's relatives took matters in their own hands and beat her. When Katerina complained about the illegal assault (compare with Document 4.2, in which the plaintiff was also litigating a slanderous accusation), she was incarcerated in a provincial cell. Under investigative torture, she admitted that she had associated with unclean spirits and that she knew how to ply witchcraft and predict the future. Given the serious nature of her confession, which approached the satanic definition of witchcraft that Peter I had introduced in the Military Statute of 1716, provincial authorities turned the case immediately over to diocesan ecclesiastical

authorities. In fact, this case is an unusual example of full cooperation between civil and ecclesiastical authorities (see the documents in 3.13). Ivanova's clerical interrogators—collectively called a consistory—advised the bishop in all aspects of diocesan administration, including manning ecclesiastical courts. At this point in time, they were mainly monks assisted by clerks or scribes.

Katerina Ivanova's confessions before the consistory are fascinating in displaying a Russian Orthodox understanding of demonology with its typical mixing of Christian and profane elements. In spite of the concerns that Peter's Military Statute had raised in tying witchcraft to satanic activity and renunciation of the Christian faith, Katerina's descriptions of the demons are devoid of the frightening or seductive characteristics of Western demons. Her demons have common names, they dress in their "Sunday-best" caftans even after they have introduced themselves to her, and they have nondescript faces. They aren't even afraid of holy objects, as Katerina is able to take communion without their interference. All she has to worry about is keeping them busy when they aren't carrying out her requests for information so that they do not cause mischief. In answering the clerics' leading questions, Katerina was insistent that she did not transgress too far by noting that she never used incantations (written or oral), that she knew no witchcraft, and most importantly had never renounced her faith. Rather, she was a practicing and faithful Orthodox Christian and even said prayers and made signs of the cross before and after she communicated with her demons.

Not only secular courts and ecclesiastical authorities had a say in this case. A medical expert also chimed in. His examination found the allegedly bewitched women were suffering not from bewitchment but rather from melancholy and a shifting of their wombs (i.e., classical hysteria). Asserting his authority and underlining a cultural chasm that was beginning to appear between a small, educated elite and a largely illiterate peasantry, the doctor concluded that the ailments would take some time to clear up because of the women's "harsh" peasant upbringing and lack of exposure to modern medicines.

Unfortunately, the case's resolution is unknown.

Please note that there are two women identified in the case with the patronymic Gavrilova, the first of which was deceased and whose first name was never identified. For clarity's sake she will be identified as "the deceased" or "now deceased." Andrei Antipev is sometimes referred to as Andrei Antipin.

Provincial office

Ivanova's testimony

(*After having been beaten with the lash in the Iaroslavl provincial office, Katerina Ivanova testified*) that she had received some grass from a married peasant woman of the village Ivanovskaia, whose patronymic was Gavrilova, but whose first name she does not know, and who died some nine years ago. Under that woman's instruction she had been able to summon two demons

and send them to drag rocks into the River Moloksha, and later told the women Tatiana Maksimova, Katerina Gavrilova, and Akilina Vasileva that she had familiarity with some demons. Upon those women's requests she dispatched those demons to various places to obtain information as to whether Tatiana's son Ilia in Vyborg, Katerina Gavrilova's husband Ivan in St. Petersburg, and Akilina's son Vasilii in Moscow were still alive. The demons did as they were told and reported back to her, Katerina. She in turn told the women that their sons and husband were still alive.

Just before St. Elijah's Day (*July 20*) of last year (*1764*), in the presence of Andrei Antipin's daughter-in-law Anna Ivanova and Petr Antipin's niece Praskovia Semenova, she, Katerina, followed the instructions of the [deceased] woman Gavrilova, who had given her some grasses. She swished them back and forth in some water with her finger and ordered one devil to enter Anna's body and the other to enter Praskovia's. She gave Anna and Praskovia the [infused] water to drink, and about ten weeks later they became demonically possessed. She removed the grasses from the water and put them in a crevice of her hut. She doesn't know whether they are still there or not but admitted that she had carried out that bewitchment out of malice.

Rostov Consistory

Ivanova's testimony without torture

In the village Ivanovskaia, which is about half a verst away from her village Tishino, Katerina Ivanova had asked the [now deceased] peasant woman, whose patronymic was Gavrilova, for some grasses to minister to her cows. Gavrilova told her that two demons would come to serve her if she used the grasses she gave her. So when she wanted to bewitch someone, she was to grind some of the grass into some water. Then she was to summon those devils at night before the cock crowed. She was to call one Ivan and the other Andrei. And if she did not have an immediate task for them to carry out, Gavrilova instructed her to send those devils to drag rocks into the Moloksha River so that they wouldn't be idle.

The reason why she, Katerina, agreed to take a bit of the grass that summons demons, when she had initially just wanted to get some grass to heal her cows, was purely her simpleness, not any interest in witchcraft. She didn't have any further conversations with Gavrilova either at that time or later. She didn't bring the grass into the house and didn't say anything to her husband and children but threw it at the fence in the yard. After about ten weeks, in the evening just before midnight and the cock's crow, when it was fairly dark and when her husband was away from home—she can't remember where he went—and she was alone, she, Katerina, wanted to find out whether what the woman Gavrilova told her was true. She glanced out the window and summoned those demons: "Ivan and Andrei! Come here!" She did so only because she was curious as to whether the devils would actually appear. When she called them, she didn't have the grass with her—it was in the crevice. And although she didn't say a prayer at that time, she had no thoughts of renouncing Christianity and communicating with those demons. Responding to her summons, those demons came to her window in the form of humans wearing caftans, but she hadn't noticed what kind of faces or other features they had at the time, and she can't describe them now because they weren't as detailed as real people and were not completely visible. The demons asked her to give them a job, and not knowing what job to give them, she followed Gavrilova's instructions and ordered them to drag rocks into the Moloksha River near the village of Tishino. With their order in hand, they left her window. She didn't see whether they dragged rocks into the river or what kinds of piles they made with them or whether that river was dammed up with those rocks. Afterward, her conversations with those demons were exactly the same—she didn't add any details. And after the first time, the demons came to her window at night for a long time, but she can't remember for how long, but it was at times when she unintentionally looked out of her window. They asked her if she had tasks for them, and not knowing exactly what kind of work to give them, she always ordered them to carry rocks into the River Moloksha, after which they departed. Not counting the first time, the demons came to her without

her having to summon them several times, but not frequently, over the course of ten weeks.

And then in a later year, but exactly which one she, Katerina, couldn't remember—it was some three years ago, after her husband had died, during the winter's St. Philip's fast, she was talking with Andrei Antipov's wife, Tatiana Maksimova, one evening at a working bee in Tatiana's home; Antipov was away. Sitting with her yarn, Tatiana said that their son Ilia, who was then in Vyborg, was ill and that she didn't know whether he would live or not. She hadn't heard a word from anyone in a long time, as a result of which she and her husband were distressed. They didn't know anyone who could find out more information. After the unmarried girls had left the working bee and they were by themselves, she told Tatiana that two demons come to her window and that she sends them to pile rocks in the River Moloksha. Tatiana asked her to send one of those demons to Vyborg to find out whether her son was still alive. After sitting only a little bit more at Tatiana's, she, Katerina, returned home, looked out of her window, and said, "Ivan, come here!" Hearing those words, that demon came to her in the same form as before. Katerina sent him to Vyborg to find out if Andrei and Tatiana's son Ilia was still alive. The demon went off. Four days later that demon came to her window in the evening, when she was not yet asleep and called her by name, asking her to look out the window. When she looked out, she saw the demon in human form wearing a caftan. In a man's voice he said that Andrei and Tatiana's son Ilia was alive in Vyborg and would soon be sending his father and mother a message. He didn't say whether he had actually gone to Vyborg or gotten the information some other way. With that, he left her home. In the morning of the same day, she went to Tatiana's home, called her to come out in the yard, and told her that her son was alive and that she and her husband would soon receive a message from him. However, she didn't tell her that she had learned this information from the demon she had dispatched. Just as she was telling Tatiana the news, the message from Ilia arrived. She doesn't know the person who delivered the message.

After that, she neither summoned nor saw the demons for ten weeks, but during the course of those ten weeks in the winter just before Butter Week (*before Lent*), Katerina Gavrilova, the wife of the peasant Ivan Maksimov of the serf village Baskakovo came to her yard, when she, Katerina, was on the street in her yard alone with Tatiana Maksimova. Gavrilova asked her to send one of the demons in her service to St. Petersburg to find out whether her husband Ivan Maksimov was alive or not. In response she, Katerina, asked Gavrilova who had told her that she had demons in her service. In the presence of the other woman, Gavrilova replied that she had gotten this information from Andrei Antipin, who had heard it from his wife Tatiana Maksimova. She, Katerina, asked Tatiana directly: "Why did you tell her that?"—to which Tatiana replied, "It's not a big deal that Gavrilova knows about it!" Gavrilova then made a bow and asked her without fail to dispatch the demon to St. Petersburg to find out about her husband. In the evening, she, Katerina, called out her window: "Andrei, come here!" With those words that demon came to her window in human form wearing a caftan. She ordered him to find information about Ivan in St. Petersburg, after which he left her, and she did not say another word to that demon. After four whole days, that demon came to her window and called her name, telling her to look outside. When she looked out, that demon told her in a man's voice that he had gone to Petersburg and that the peasant Maksimov was alive. The demon left without saying another word. After three days, she, Katerina, went to the village Baskachevo for her household needs. When she found the peasant woman Gavrilova alone, she told her that her husband was alive, but didn't say that she had sent one of the demons to get that information.

After that, some time went by, but she can't remember how much or whether it was in the winter or summer, her daughter-in-law Akilina Vasileva, who lived in the same village, said that after her husband's death, her son Petr Vasilevich had gone to live in Moscow, and she doesn't know whether he is alive and in good health. She, Katerina, told her that she has two demons as servants and that she would send one of them to find out about her son. Akilina asked her to do this, after which they parted. That

same day in the evening, she, Katerina, summoned one of the demons to the window, but she can't remember which one, and sent him to Moscow to find out if Peter was still alive. After two full days in the evening, that devil came to her window and summoned her in a male voice; when she looked out he informed her that Peter was alive and then left. That very evening she informed her daughter-in-law, who lives in a separate hut but in the same yard, that her son was alive, but she didn't tell her that she had dispatched a demon. After those three errands, she did not summon the demons anymore and they did not come to her on their own.

Last year in 1764 before the holiday of the prophet Elijah, but exactly when she, Katerina, doesn't remember, some peasants of the village Tishino, Andrei Antipin and his brother Petr, who at that time resided in the same home, seized Katerina's land out of spite. That land had remained in her hands after her husband's death and she and her children held it in tiaglo (*a work unit in the Russian system of serfdom, usually made up of a husband and wife team*). In revenge she decided to bewitch Andrei's daughter-in-law Anna Ivanova, wife of Ilia, and Peter's niece Paraskeva Semenova, Semen Afanasev's wife, also from Tishino. She did so in the following manner. Remembering Gavrilova's instructions, she took the grass from the crevice in her yard, where it had always been and which she had not taken out when she had dispatched the devils to Vyborg, Petersburg, and Moscow. She poured some water in a small bucket from her house, dropped the grass into the water, stirred it with her finger, and told one of the demons to enter Anna's body and the other to enter Praskovia's. Then she stuck the grass back into the crevice in the yard and went to Andrei and Petr Antipin's home, which was nearby, carrying the bucket of water. Having entered the Antipins' entry hall, she didn't find anyone, although somebody might have been inside the hut—who exactly she doesn't know. In the hall she saw a bucket of water, and she poured the water from her small bucket into it. She didn't utter any incantation. Then she returned home and didn't tell anybody about what she had done. After Anna and Praskovia had drunk the water, about ten weeks after she had transferred the water from her bucket to theirs, Anna and Praskovia began to shriek that she had bewitched them.

She doesn't know whether the Antipin brothers or any of the other family members they identified also drank the water.

She doesn't know whether Anna and Praskovia are still shrieking. Other than those two women, she, Katerina, did not "spoil" anyone else, and she doesn't know any witchcraft. When she put the grass in the small bucket of water, the only words she uttered was the command to each of the demons to enter a different woman. She never ordered the demons Ivan and Andrei, who were previously in [the deceased] Gavrilova's service, to leave the women. She didn't have any more meetings with the demons and doesn't know where they might have gone. And after she dispatched one of them to Moscow, they did not come to her any more. She does not know any sorcerers and sorceresses. She is unable to cure Anna and Praskovia, the women who were identified as having been bewitched by her, and if the demons are truly possessing them, she can't summon them.

During her ten-year acquaintance with the demons, she went to confession and partook of the Holy Mysteries. When she took communion she didn't experience any difficulties from the demons. She didn't associate with them, but when she did talk with them, both before and afterward, she said the prayer, "God, have mercy," and sometimes also, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy upon us!" And when she lay down in the evening and got up in the morning, she prayed to God, as was her habit, and as previously always made the sign of the cross with three fingers (*rather than two as practiced by schismatic Old Believers*). In the future she, Katerina, will not have any dealings with witchcraft or any acquaintance with demons whatsoever. She renounces all of it and wishes to be firm and unwavering in the holy Orthodox-Catholic faith. She will go to confession and take communion every year, which is why she very sincerely wants to confess her sins and partake of the Holy Mysteries today. And she has never abjured Christianity and has not had communications with demons, except for the sole few words she declared above. She also didn't have and doesn't have any notes, books, or notebooks about witchcraft and doesn't know anyone who does.

Witness statements under interrogation

On September 17, 1765, the priest, deacon, and sacristan of the Church of St. George the Passion-Bearer in Iukhotsk Volost, Iaroslavl District, testified that they had not observed the peasant widow Katerina Ivanova or her children dabbling in witchcraft and that they regularly attend church, go to confession, and take communion.

Tatiana Maksimova, Katerina Gavrilova, and Akilina Vasileva stated that they had not received any news of their relatives from Moscow, Vyborg, and Petersburg from Katerina. In the end, Katerina herself confessed that "not being able to stand up to torture," she had made everything up.

Only the two shrieking peasant women and their patrons, their father-in-law and uncle, continued to claim that they were not "falsely" shrieking and described the illness as follows:

> Their neighbor, the widow Katerina Ivanova, was in their home for a short time; they don't know where she went afterward. When she was in their home, she, Anna, can't remember what they talked about; she remembers only that in Katerina's presence and after she left, she laughed a great deal for no reason; she doesn't know why. After two weeks she began to feel ill: melancholy came over her and her heart began to throb; she couldn't figure out the cause. She was ill like that in 1764 on the feast day of the Great Martyr Dimitrii of Solun (*November 8*). She can't remember whether it was on the day itself or afterward, but she suddenly became more melancholy than before, as a result of which she flung herself onto benches and the floor at home and lost consciousness. She doesn't remember what she said in that unconscious state. It was only when she started to come to and the melancholy lessened that her father-in-law, mother-in-law, and the peasant Nikonov told her that during her melancholy state she had shouted that Katerina Ivanova had bewitched her.

Verdict

(*Having examined everything, the consistory members in April 1766 dispatched Katerina Ivanova to Rostov's women's monastery.*) They reiterated to the abbess that she instill in the accused woman Katerina Ivanova the fear of God so that she would reveal the whole truth about whether or not she really had knowledge of demons and bewitched the women. In the meantime, they ordered Katerina to attend all the church services in that monastery, and as long as she didn't tell the truth, she was to be placed in the porch area and not in the church proper. (*In June 1766, the*

mother superior reported that Katerina was comporting herself well and maintained that she had talked about witchcraft and demons because she hadn't been able to stand up to the torture.)

Provincial office

(On October 15, 1766, Katerina Ivanova went to confession and was allowed to take communion. She was then sent back to the provincial office where she was tortured and interrogated again.)

A Rostov doctor's expert testimony regarding the shriekers

From time to time these women experience melancholy. It results from long-term damage to their blood and female organs, and from time to time it becomes stronger such that the womb wanders from its position, and the melancholy increases from both female impatience and female weakness, as a result of which the limbs can weaken and in a state of unconsciousness and outside of the mind they can shout in such a manner that it doesn't penetrate their minds. It is possible to recover from that illness more quickly when the initial appearance of the weakness and melancholy are observed by medical science. But since these women have a harsh upbringing and are not accustomed to medicines, little hope remains that they will recover quickly.

4.10 AN EPIDEMIC OF DEMONIC POSSESSION IN A URALS FOUNDRY TOWN (1839–40)

Source: Transcription of a file from the State Archive of Sverdlovsk Region (GASO), f. 6, op. 2, d. 480, in S. V. Golikova, "Klikushestvo glazami sviashchennika," in *Religiia i tserkov' v Sibiri: Sbornik nauchnykh statei i dokumental'nykh materialov* (Tiumen: RUTRA, 1995), 8:103–11.

The following account of the clerical superintendent Dmitrii Florovskii describes an epidemic of demonic possession in the spring and summer of 1839 in the Urals' settlement of Lower Utkinskaia. The epidemic in Lower Utkinskaia unfolded near the end of April 1839, when six individuals manifested signs of *klikushestvo* or demonic possession. It escalated through the summer as the total number of possessed individuals reached forty-four. The authorities dispatched doctors to the settlement, and they issued a dismissive medical assessment: they found the shriekers to be frauds. As the case continued, the Ekaterinburg diocesan office sent Father Florovskii to Lower Utkinskaia to make his assessment and "to gather testimonials from their [the *klikushi*'s] neighbors and local residents in general."[31] The superintendent proceeded to conduct his investigation with the help of the Georgiev parish priest Father Evgenii Ogloblin in August 1839.

Father Florovskii's account presents us with an unusual insight into clerical thinking as well as popular understandings of *klikushestvo*. In this instance, Florovskii and the settlement's inhabitants by and large shared similar beliefs and thinking. They participated in the ritual aspects of the possession drama, interpreting behaviors and signs as reflective of demonic and magical activity, although Father Florovskii does suggest that some poisonous substances might have been involved. In his opinion, all but one of the afflicted women suffered from actual possession, and he recommended spiritual healing for them.

Florovskii's thinking was in sharp contrast to that of the government officials and doctors who subscribed to the definition of *klikushestvo* as criminal fraudulent behavior. Their efforts to unmask what they saw as feigned possession matched the intent of the law, with its skeptical position on *klikushestvo* (see Document 3.12). Nonetheless, Father Florovskii complained, the doctors and secular authorities in this case had abused their authority in their treatment of the women, which amounted to a kind of shock therapy. They ordered the women hosed for an extended period of time with gallons of ice-cold water while standing naked in a public square. The superintendent deplored the cruelty of the water torture, while he also pointed out the illegality of forcing the women to disrobe.

The social composition of industrial and mining communities in the Urals was complicated. The area was sparsely populated, mainly by state peasants, that is, peasants who lived on land owned by the state rather than by private landlords. To staff the regional mining enterprises, many of those peasants were forcibly transferred and ascribed to foundries and mines, which meant that they became serfs. In their new status, they earned a wage and farmed modest land plots but were under the harsh thumb of the factory owners. The foundry in Lower Utkinskaia belonged to the Iakovlevs, a noble family that originally belonged to the merchant estate. In the early 1760s, Peter III had granted the extremely successful entrepreneur Savva Iakovlevich Sobakin noble status, which came with the new family name Iakovlev. The latter began buying metallurgical foundries in the 1770s. In 1807 and 1813, decrees reclassified these serfs as *nepremennye* (permanent) laborers in initial steps to emancipate them. According to these new definitions, the ones that were in place at the time of the possession outbreak, the peasants were not completely free but unlike serfs earned a salary, received free

bread, and were exempt from paying taxes. They appear in the document as "obligated laborers." The foundries also continued to employ state peasants and serfs.

Father Iakovlev's investigative report

Who did they initially identify as the culprits behind this illness and who among them specifically plays the role of enchanters, healers, those they call witches? The answers from the entire community were identical: according to several people, for a long time—twelve years—the strongest suspicions fell on the wife of Master Iakovlev's obligated laborer Timofei Selianin, who with grasses or mineral substances gave many people and animals hernias (*kily*) and poisoned birds, cats, and dogs. As a result of the suffering she unleashed, many of the residents lost their animals. Having uncovered her secret actions, residents repeated their contention to Master Iakovlev's office in Utkinsk that it should take legal measures against this sorceress (*charodeika*) by detaining her so that she would not commit malevolent or fatal actions against animals, which cannot speak for themselves, or against people. Since they made their denunciation, Evdokia Selianina has not uttered any of her malevolent knowledge ("*of witchcraft" is implied here*). The second person was the wife of the state peasant Ivan Virachev, Evdokia. Her mother practiced witchcraft and was exiled to Siberia for her confirmed malevolent actions. The third—the wife of the obligated laborer Nikita Liamtin—Maria Pavlovna, who was transferred from the Lower Tagilskii Factory because of her betrothal to Liamtin, according to neighbors, was from her very first appearance in the village of Lower Utkinskaia suspected of having ties with unclean spirits and witchcraft; she also taught others magic.

All of these witches are of the Orthodox confession, but they do not fulfill any of their Christian obligations and do not take Holy Communion. Up to the present year, the above-named sorceresses have neither openly acknowledged their devilish knowledge nor undone the evil that their magic has worked on those at a distance, those nearby, and even on their relatives —in one case those in her own home. Four people are suffering in the last-mentioned witch's family because of her. Since May, as if in response to the witches' singular desire, the epidemic of demonic possession has, like a flood, inundated the lower village and has not completely dried up. After a

committee of doctors took measures and prescribed necessary remedies, two have become sick again—the peasant Iakov Aristov's eighteen-year-old daughter Matrona and Tito Petrov Drozdov's eight-year-old daughter Agripina. And in spite of the fact that the witches are under arrest in Utkinsk's factory by order of Police Chief Volkov, their successors—the widow Khionia Ivanova Aristova, a serf belonging to Master Demidov, and the married woman Marfa Dimitrieva—have taken their place. The initial consequences of the application of their knowledge (*"of witchcraft" is implied here*) have manifested themselves in the maiden Matrona Aristova and the minor Agripina.

After the preliminary investigation revealed the identities of the culprits of the widespread epidemic, I found it necessary to ask the residents what methods the sorceresses use to realize their goal, how those act on the organisms of the afflicted, and what makes the afflicted susceptible to demonic possession. The residents aren't entirely sure. Some contend that the witches are using poisonous substances that they mix in food and drink, as a result of which a perfectly healthy person suddenly begins to experience pressure in the pit of the stomach, melancholy, and then uncontrollable movement in the limbs. Then the person utters piercing cries, experiences some form of hiccups, and finally expresses strong indignation against the well-known healer-witches (*znakhari*). When the demonically possessed come into contact with the latter, they are ready to tear them apart. If they do not come in contact with the witches but have worked themselves up in a crazed state, the possessed shriek out their names—Dunka! Dunka! Elenka! Elenka!—in a rapid patter for having planted demons in them. It is this sort of shrieking that prompts people to refer to the suffering women as shriekers. All their seizures end with tears, after which the victims appear to be healthy again. However, despite such intense suffering, none of the ill persons, as one can see, loses her reason. The sufferers are almost all women. During their demonic fits and upon the conclusion of their hysterical convulsions, they do not cross the boundary of decency, they do not uncover their flesh like true demoniacs (*icons often depict demoniacs in*

a state of partial undress), and they provide grounds for an experienced eye to distinguish these strange fits from natural illnesses.

Those who have stronger beliefs in the power of healer-witches contend that the sorceresses have ties with dark spirits and do not use any physical or other means; it is as if they imbue the very air with their will and desires, which are the sole causes of all the suffering they inflict on other people out of malice. They only have to wish a person ill for signs of illness to befall that person.

Having heard these incredible stories and wanting the opportunity to convince myself of the truth, I summoned one of the women possessed by an unclean spirit, namely, the wife of Master Demidov's serf Ivan Fedorov Vesnin, Elena Iakovlevna. With every type of argument she assured me that she had never taken any food or drink from her sister-in-law Maria Pavlovna Liamtina and because of the long-standing enmity between them never went into her quarters. However, one time when she saw her brothers coming back from the fields and she went into the yard to meet them, her sister-in-law asked her for the thirty kopecks she owed her. "After the many requests, attempts at persuasion, and guarantees that one of my brothers made on my behalf because of my poverty, Maria remained inflexible in her demand and raged at me: 'You'll remember those thirty kopecks well!' " At that instant Elena became ill, and up to now she has periodic fits; some type of frenzy tortures her periodically. Even now, at the end of one of her fits, she tells me everything that I just described. She still experiences her affliction whenever her sister-in-law comes near her lodging. She calms herself down by kissing the Gospels and the Life-Giving Cross, and drinking Holy Epiphany water. This woman did not have any other natural ailments; she is quite stout, has rosy cheeks, and is in the best of health. In fact, all of the demon-possessed women were able to do their household chores after their afflictions had passed.

Wanting to see how the afflictions unfolded in individual households, I visited the peasant Petr Aristov and his son Vasilii, whose wives Evfemia and Maria are demonically possessed. Upon my entry into the room, the ill women weren't exhibiting any [signs of possession] but rather calmly

described for me the initial onset of their sufferings: they had been sitting behind their looms and talking to each other about the strange illness spreading in the village, when suddenly they felt pressure in the pit of their stomachs, followed by melancholy, hiccuping, a piercing scream, and tears. They told me they couldn't think of anything at that very moment that would have caused the illness: they shared the same food, work, and type of existence and ruled out any suspicion that the witches might have slipped them some kind of poison that day. In the midst of our conversation these women suddenly uttered piercing screams, stuttered, and tried to hide from us, all the while refusing to make the sign of the cross and to say the names of Our Savior Jesus Christ and blessed saints, but these fits quickly came to an end. The sick women go to confession each year but have not taken communion for two years; they do not have Epiphany water in their homes, and on Epiphany Eve, almost none of the residents of the lower settlement obtain holy water from the church to bless their homes and for drinking purposes.

My observations have convinced me that the sick, when they see holy things, not only have convulsions and tremors but also have a fairly strong aversion to clerics, which manifests itself in piercing shrieks, grimacing, and shaking throughout the body, all characteristics of having unclean spirits in their hearts. The fits continue until they become weak. After shedding lots of tears, they are able to kiss holy objects. Since the recent appearance of the illness, none of the victims has received the Holy Eucharist. If after having similar temporary convulsions the genuinely possessed are quietly and without repugnance able to kiss the Holy Gospels and Life-Giving Cross, then they should also be able to take the Holy Eucharist.

The characteristics of the afflicted, as diagnosed by the committee of doctors, when viewed separately and quickly, can dishearten even the most rigorous observer, including myself. This time, however, I am compelled to side with popular opinion that the sorceresses have ties with unclean spirits, which they implant in people. However, in observing the rather brief paroxysms of some of the afflicted, one can be convinced of the opposite. In other words, what we have here are two different categories of the afflicted.

The members of the first relate that at some point during a meal, when the witches are present, if they do not protect themselves by making the sign of the cross over their food and drink, they begin to experience discomfort in the stomach, a terrible melancholy, and sometimes anger; it's possible in this case that poisonous substances are taking their effect. To the second category belong deceivers who can be easily identified through constant observation. Hidden reasons might make them take on the role of the demonically possessed. The truth lies in their family life. Trouble can occur when a wife is petty and her husband is uneducated or strict but a good manager, hard-working, and a good Christian. The wife may not be used to working and likes a happy, carefree life and is not an enthusiast of prayer. This is when domestic disagreements might occur and at that point an unclean spirit appears. According to those easily deceived, because an unclean spirit cannot tolerate arguments, every tiff between a husband and wife results in possession. However, there aren't many who suffer from this. I noticed only one woman who belongs to this category.

What measures did the doctors take to drive evil spirits from the afflicted? In my opinion these were not medical but rather violent and illegal measures. They responded as if the victims had committed criminal acts. On a public square, where the law strictly forbids the disrobing of women, before the assembly of four doctors and Ivan Kitaev, the bailiff of Utkinsk, and in the presence of the majority of the workers, the [afflicted] women and eighteen-year-old maidens were stripped naked and their hair loosened. Two men stood on each side of every woman, holding her by the hands. Then, having lost all love of humanity, they poured the equivalent of one or two 40-bucket barrels (*one 40-bucket barrel was equivalent to 121 gallons*) of ice water from the fire truck on each afflicted woman, ordering them to turn fully around, aiming the hose on the spot where the women had said they had felt their spirit As they did so, they sarcastically asked them whether their unclean spirit had departed. When the afflicted and coerced experienced the nasty shock of the cold water …, they became extremely weak and in some cases fainted. Those who were about to collapse pronounced the elicited confession that an unclean spirit had departed and

that their convulsions had passed, as a result of which they were freed from the cruel operation. Not wishing to undergo a repeat of the ordeal, the sick assured the committee of doctors that they were completely healthy. But as soon as those cured by the committee of doctors returned home, they not only had cold symptoms but once again experienced their previous afflictions.

The number of instances continues to grow every time someone in authority over the shriekers appears in the lower village. When these visitors approach the village, if those afflicted by convulsions are not in the village at the time and they do not see the approaching officials or hear about them from others, even so, from a distance of sometimes as much as 10 versts (*6.6 miles*) or more they begin to feel completely weak and an unusual melancholy. They begin to cry and shriek in a piercing manner. They can't even do the simplest chores. When they come into contact with secular or religious authorities, they begin to experience feelings of revulsion (*otvrashchenie*) and overwhelming fear and hysterical fits; they shout in a piercing manner, guffaw, and hiccup, and several hide in their homes. The following examples uphold this:

- Not too far a distance from my lodging, Father Evgenii Ogloblin, Master Iakovlev's obligated laborer Ioann Demidov Kuznetsov, and I were examining the wood that had been prepared for the construction of a chapel, when toward us came Vasilisk Zakharov Selianin's wife Paraskovia carrying water. She has the most modest appearance and, according to neighbors, an excellent character. Having seen us from afar, the color immediately drained out of her face. She could hardly hold her bucket and could barely stand on her feet because her limbs were shaking. Nevertheless, she came to us for a blessing, all the while crying and sobbing. After we blessed her, she weakened further and experienced the strong, first paroxysms of the illness. In my quarters she cried. Three times she tried to take some holy water but vomited up a demon instead. The unclean spirit who had resided in her was named Cry Baby (*Plaksivoi*).
- Afterward, Paraska Selinina ran into Master Iakovlev's obligated laborer Izosim Kosmin Sysoev, who was riding a horse together with

his wife Tatiana. When Tatiana saw us from a distance, she began to experience convulsions similar to the ones of the earlier illness and called us heretics. She jumped off the horse and hid in her home. When she was brought to my quarters, she guffawed, cried, fell on the floor, and had convulsions typical of a light case of demonic possession. The name of her demon was Joker (*Khokhotun*).

- In response to my order, only two more women were brought to me for examination, as the others were away: Khionia Aleksandrova, Karp Sysoev's wife. The name of the unclean spirit in Khionia was Rider (*Sedun*), because at the end of her sobbing and the convulsions of demonic possession she had no strength in her legs….

None of these women have any history of conflict within their families or community quarrel that would have caused such a full-blown illness.

- Irina Mikhailova, Moisei Aristov's wife, cried a lot and hiccuped but was able to drink holy water and kiss the Holy Cross and Gospels. This woman clearly does not have a good relationship with her husband, although she tried to convince me otherwise. It would appear that she is good at feigning illness.

Having described all of the characteristics and nature of the illness of the afflicted, I must conclude that several of them deserve full compassion and measures that can restore their health. If the committee of doctors does not find it necessary to treat the afflicted, then these unfortunate women should search in the heart of the Mother Holy Church and Her Holy Mysteries for deliverance from their cruel sufferings.

August 16, 1839

Epilogue

(The superintendent did send a fuller report to his bishop, who in turn filed a secret report with the Holy Synod [the Church's governing body], dated June 15, 1840. In the new section, Father Florovskii noted that the settlement of Lower Utkinskaia had previously experienced the Old Believer schismatic movement and that he had overheard some of the possession victims saying schismatic prayers. His comments complicated his general

assessment of the epidemic of demonic possession as he wondered if the Old Belief was not lurking somewhere in the villagers' afflictions, "engendering in the sufferers an initial aversion to the clergy and the saints of the true church." Old Belief might explain why the demoniacs had not taken holy communion when it was offered them, although it was not uncommon even for Orthodox believers to disobey the law that stipulated that they had to take communion once a year. Rather than turn to the Church for prayers of exorcism, confession, and communion, villagers, Father Florovskii reported, were seeking the help of a sorcerer in the village Talitsa named Ivan Filippov Ropanikov, who reportedly had three demons under his authority. Such an action did not distinguish them from Orthodox believers who also turned to unwitchers—those who could reverse witches' harm—for help. Father Florovskii's concern about schismatic activity did not, however, dampen his belief that witches were responsible for implanting demons in people and causing the epidemic of possession. He also reported that the community of Lower Utkinskaia was demanding that the main witches be exiled as a way of putting a stop to the epidemic. Sympathetic to the demand, he concluded that if the witches were not evicted, then all the inhabitants of the settlement would soon suffer from the same ailment.[32])

4.11 THE 1853 CASE AGAINST THE SERF GERASIM FEDOTOV FOR WITCHCRAFT

Source: Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv goroda Moskvy, f. 91, op. 2, d. 659.

This late case from Moscow Province illustrates the workings of the courts of equity, which Catherine II set up in 1775 as part of her overhaul of the provincial administration and legal systems.[33] These courts were to rule on cases involving witchcraft that were initially investigated by police officials at the local level in the district land court. The investigations involved gathering testimonies from plaintiffs, defendants, eyewitnesses, and the larger community (including villages adjacent to the one where a suspect lived) as well as seeking medical examinations of any substances found in an alleged sorcerer's

or healer's possession. Investigators asked all witnesses whether they had ever seen an accused witch or sorcerer ply his or her trade. Any healers who had been consulted in the case had to describe the remedies they had applied, their conclusions about the nature of the illnesses they were treating and what caused the illnesses, and whether they had taken any fees for their services. Those findings were supposed to be turned over to the court of equity for adjudication, with strict orders that the judges were to be merciful in their verdicts concerning a crime that had resulted from "stupidity, deception, and ignorance" (see the first document in 3.19).

The files of the courts of equity always begin with a summary of the case at hand, which was based on the summary that a scribe at the lower court had provided. The latter was key in setting the contours and parameters of the case. In this instance the judges in the court of equity learned immediately that Gerasim Fedotov, the defendant charged with witchcraft, had previously been investigated for another charge involving "harmful actions" at the land court level and publicly punished by one of the court's officials in front of his village assembly, which would have consisted of all household heads. This report might have predisposed the judges against Fedotov, although that negative assessment was mitigated by the fact that the reported search of Fedotov's home had not uncovered any substances that might have been employed in witchcraft.

The case against the serf Gerasim Fedotov for witchcraft illuminates popular beliefs in witchcraft and sorcery intertwined with Russian Orthodox practices, social tensions within village communities, the medical profession's rationalist arguments, and the state's intent on maintaining law and order without infringing on serfowners' rights and privileges. The figure of the plaintiff Lavr Stepanov is key in the case. Unlike many other cases, which involved an entire community as plaintiff and numerous accusations from a variety of people against a suspected witch or group of witches, in this case Stepanov was the sole accuser. Accordingly, he needed greater evidence against the defendant to turn his suspicions into a viable charge. Although Stepanov accused Fedotov of being responsible for his first wife's premature death, he did not file a complaint right away but waited until after his second wife, Vasilisa Kirilova, had become ill on two separate occasions after having had contact with Fedotov. Stepanov's assumption that his neighbor was responsible for his first wife's death and the illness of his current wife fits the pattern of witchcraft accusations in Russia and elsewhere. Witchcraft accusations often erupted after decades of bad blood and suspicion within communities. Predisposed to think that humans were at the root of other people's misery, individuals commonly searched their memories for suspicious episodes in the past to account for death or misfortune.

A lack of evidence to support Stepanov's charges resulted in Fedotov's acquittal. However, he was not yet totally in the clear. The court added the provision that his owner, Count Efimovskii, had the right to take measures to ensure peace on his estate if villagers remained convinced that Fedotov was a sorcerer. Efimovskii's decision on the matter is not recorded. He may simply have kept Fedotov off the estate as much as possible, as he had previously done, by giving him a passport to work elsewhere, or he may have had him exiled to Siberia.

Two of the healing techniques described in the case require commentary. Both were meant to counter bewitchment. The healer Danil Vasilev prescribed Stepanov's first wife a concoction of infused grass that had to be imbibed on twelve specific days at dawn or she would die. The twelve days of treatment relate to the Western Christian apocryphal narrative about the twelve Fridays, which designated twelve specific Fridays spaced out over the course of a year as absolutely necessary for fasting. The narrative about this fasting practice as well as the practice itself were condemned by the sixteenth-century Stoglav and Peter the Great's 1721 Spiritual Regulation but to no avail.[34] The second treatment involved a brief "baking" of a bewitched individual in a warm bread oven. This was a common method for purging other illnesses, especially among infants. A symbolic baking of a bewitched person was meant to turn the raw into something whole and perfect.

By order of His Imperial Majesty on December 15, 1853, the Moscow court of equity, hearing the case concerning the peasant Gerasim Fedotov of the village Aleshino on the estate of the Counts Efimovskii in Ruzhsk District, which had been brought to the court's attention by the peasant of that same estate, Lavr Stepanov, ruled on the basis of the following: on October 2, 1851, Lavr Stepanov had complained to Count Andrei Efimovskii, a collegiate assessor, about the peasant Gerasim Fedotov, charging him with destroying his family's health by means of witchcraft. Count Efimovskii, having given that complaint over to the purview of the Ruzhsk land court, added that because of the harmful actions of the peasant Fedotov, Fedotov had previously been brought to the land court's attention in 1848 and for those actions was punished by the nonpeasant head of the court's council in front of members of the village assembly. A search of Fedotov's home did not uncover any herbs, or medicines, or anything else that would have convicted him of witchcraft.

Testimony of Lavr Stepanov

Lavr Stepanov explained that in 1848 on the holiday of the Feast of the Entrance of the Most Holy Mother of God into the Temple (*November 21*), he was taking a nap, as he often did on a holiday, when the peasant Gerasim Fedotov came to his house. His wife, Irina Egorova, naturally treated Fedotov to a glass of vodka. He drank half of it. Egorova added to the glass and raised a glass to Fedotov, but he didn't want to drink unless she did so as well. Then his wife drank half a glass and once again refilled her guest's

glass. Fedotov drank the whole glass of vodka followed by the wooden cup of beer she had fetched for him, after which he went on his way. That very day, his wife, Irina Egorova, became ill enough that she had to lie down. First her throat hurt her, then she began to feel an ache and noise in her head. When she became delirious, she called out Gerasim Fedotov's name.

Knowing that there was a peasant named Danil Vasilev who lived on Count Redlikh's estate in the village of Laushino and who treated bewitched people with various grasses, he, Stepanov, went to see him. Stepanov begged him to come to his home to treat his wife. Vasilev concluded from his examination that she was bewitched and prescribed her some sort of grass. He ordered her to consume as much of the grass infused in drink as she could and said that if she drank the concoction for twelve dawns in a row, she would feel relief and would remain alive; otherwise she would die. After the twelve dawns and a week and a half before Shrovetide in 1851, she died. Quickly thereafter her baby also died.

After some time, he, Stepanov, married the peasant woman Vasilisa Kirilova. A week after the wedding, his wife was chopping wood in the street when Fedotov came up to her and asked her if she was Lavr Stepanov's wife. She answered him and Fedotov went away, but his (*Stepanov's*) wife Kirilova, upon returning home felt a strong headache and began to wither. He drove her to the village Novinki to see the peasant woman Maria Terenteva, who concluded that she was suffering from bewitchment. She baked her in the oven and gave her some grasses to ingest. Those treatments helped his wife, and she completely recovered.

In September of that same year, Fedotov drove out of the forest. As he neared the fields his load fell to one side. Fedotov asked Stepanov's wife if she could give him something to drink. She did so, but immediately began to ache all over. He, Stepanov, was also in the fields and was able to drive his wife home. He showed the peasant men and peasant women who had gathered there what had happened to her. Subsequently, he again turned to the peasant woman Terenteva for help. Terenteva gave his wife her remedies, and in two full days they healed her completely.

All of those misfortunes, Stepanov added, occurred as a result of Fedotov's witchcraft, which he has been plying for around twenty years. However, he hasn't heard of Fedotov doing anyone harm. Similarly, he doesn't know why Fedotov bewitched his family since they had never quarreled and they had no bad feelings toward each other.

Testimonies of Stepanov's family members

The testimony of Stepanov's wife, the peasant woman Kirilova, matched her husband's. She added that she had not heard anything about the circumstances affecting her husband's first wife. The peasant Mikhail Stepanov responded that he knows nothing about the events his brother related on account of the fact that he lives in Moscow. His wife, Matrena Ivanova, testified in accordance with her brother-in-law Lavr Stepanov's testimony, adding, that when Fedotov was in their hut, she either didn't see anything or wasn't home at that time.

Testimony of Gerasim Fedotov

On June 12, Count Efimovskii's peasant Fedotov said that he had never practiced witchcraft and doesn't have the means to bewitch people. On a church holiday he was a guest at the peasant Stepanov's home and he doesn't remember, because so much time had passed, whether he drank with Stepanov's first wife. However, according to peasant custom that was possible. Likewise, he doesn't remember whether he said anything to Stepanov's second wife, Vasilisa Kirilova, when she chopped wood on the street. He also doesn't remember what he said to her on the second occasion. He doesn't know what caused Egorova to become ill and die; and he doesn't know why Stepanov considers him a sorcerer. When his wagon full of twigs fell over and Kirilova gave him something to drink, he might have appeared drunk because he had been in the woods too long.

Testimony of Agrafina Vasileva

Fedotov's wife, the peasant Agrafina Vasileva, upheld the description of the latter event, adding that she and her husband Fedotov did not practice

witchcraft, nor do they have any grasses or any dangerous substances in their home.

Testimony of Maria Terenteva

Maria Terenteva, a peasant woman from the treasury village Novinkovo in Ruzhsk District, testified that she has been healing people for twenty years. She uses grasses, St. John's wort (zveroboi, *a known prophylactic against witches and sorcerers*), and beech, which she harvests. Sometimes she draws illness from the sick by baking them in the oven and massaging them. She doesn't use any other remedies. In 1857, the peasant Lavr Stepanov did bring his wife twice: before Butter Week (*prior to Lent*) and in September. The first time she fed her some grasses, and the second time not only gave her grasses but also baked her in the oven. The ill woman felt relief both times. She did say something to Stepanova about her being bewitched, but she doesn't know what caused the first wife to die. She did not see Gerasim Fedotov engage in witchcraft. As for her fees, all leave what they can.

No poisonous substances of any kind were found in Terenteva's home.

Testimony of Danil Vasilev

Danil Vasilev, a peasant from the village Ladyshino on Count Redlikh's estate in Gzhatsk District, testified that three years ago the peasant Lavr Stepanov had come to him and asked him to ride with him to the village to tend to his wife because a long time ago he had written down a prescription for treating bewitched people. He rode with Stefanov to Ladyshino. Upon examining Stepanov's wife, he said that she was bewitched and treated her for that illness. He gave her crushed grasses and ordered her to infuse them in water and to drink it like tea, one spoonful at dawn and one at dusk. She was to continue that treatment every day for a period of twelve dawns. He told Stepanov that if his wife follows his instructions she would remain alive; otherwise she would die. He, Vasilev, does not know how she had been bewitched or and by whom. People told him that she had been bewitched by Gerasim Fedotov. Vasilev explained that he only uses purple loosestrife (plakun, *which was believed to make witches cry and act as a prophylactic against their spells*), which he gathers on St. John's Day for

healing purposes; he dries it, grinds it into a powder, and gives it to the sick.[35] Following his late father's practice, he lets it steep like tea and envelopes it with smoke, depending on the illness.

At Vasilev's home, glass containers with powders from the root of loosestrife and various grasses were found and sent to the Medical Office for examination.

Testimonies of other witnesses

Twelve peasants of the village Aleshino testified under oath that they never saw Gerasim Fedotov engaging in sorcery and that they don't know what caused the illnesses of Lavr Stepanov's two wives or the nature of their illnesses. Twenty-three individuals of the surrounding five villages said the same thing under oath.

The soldier's wife, Maria Efremova, testified under oath that since she was the village midwife, she was invited to Vasilisa Kirilova's home, where she put the sick woman in the warm oven and rubbed her stomach. She could tell that Kirilova was not well because she had bled too early (*i.e., had trouble with her pregnancy*).

Count Efimovskii's estate manager, the merchant Nizhegorodets from Mozhaisk, responded that he could not confirm whether the peasant Lavr Stepanov's suspicions of Gerasim Fedotov were correct, because when he told him of his suspicions, he did not bring any witnesses with him.

Report of the Ruzhsk land court

The head of the Council of the Ruzhsk land court explained in a written report that in 1848, upon Count Efimovskii's request, he had looked into the peasants' charges against Gerasim Fedotov, but they did not present any evidence against Fedotov except to say that he attended all weddings and always asked for vodka, facts which Fedotov himself acknowledged. Upon the landowner's request, Fedotov had been punished with ten strikes of the birch rod in front of the village assembly and warned to behave himself.

Count Efimovskii's report

That information was upheld by the report of Count Efimovskii, who added, that in order to end the suspicions about Gerasim Fedotov causing illnesses, he gave Fedotov a passport so that he could live elsewhere. Since that time Fedotov came home only to renew his passport or because of some other unusual need.

The medical report

The peasants Gerasim Fedotov, Lavr Stepanov, Danil Vasilev, and Maria came under the investigation of the Medical Department. A physical and forensic-chemical examination of the materials discovered in the peasant Vasilev's home found that (1) among the grasses and roots identified as specimens 1–7, none could be considered by medical knowledge to be harmful; (2) that one of the powders (no. 8) is similar to that made from the grass of a particular type of purple loosestrife; no metallic poisons were found; and (3) that it was impossible to determine accurately the botanical provenance of three of the substances—nos. 2, 6, and 8; and because a fourth (no. 7) is not used in medicine, they could not come to any conclusions about the effects of these four substances on the human organism.

The medical examiners inquired whether the land court would allow them to destroy the substances because of the inconvenience and difficulty in sending them by post. They wondered if they could instead immediately provide information about the aftereffects.

Verdict

Having examined the accounts of the circumstances, the court of equity finds that (1) the peasant Gerasim Fedotov did not admit to harming the health of the two women in question and that he did not have the means to do so. Similarly, the investigation did not reveal that he took any actions in relation to these women or in general profited from the gullibility of the people in posing as a sorcerer; (2) the peasant Lavr Stepanov, having charged Fedotov with witchcraft and accused him of allegedly bewitching his wives, did not present any evidence to support his accusations. Stepanov evidently acted out of his gullibility and ignorance; (3) the substances found

among the things belonging to the treasury peasant Maria Terenteva and Count Redlikh's peasant Danil Vasilev, which they used to treat the sick and simple people who came to them, were not, on the basis of their physical and chemical properties, injurious to people's health, and no illegalities were discovered.

As a consequence, the court decided on the basis of article 97 of the Penal Code to free the peasant Gerasim Fedotov without penalty. At the same time, it decided not to hinder the estate owner from taking measures with regard to Fedotov that would stave off the kind of malice that could set off protests among peasants who believed that the said peasant Fedotov possessed some sort of supernatural power; to reprimand Lavr Stepanov, a peasant from the same estate, for making an unsubstantiated charge without foundation in accordance with article 116 of the same Penal Code; to acquit Count Redlikh's peasant Danil Vasilev and the treasury peasant Maria Terenteva; and not to require the Medical Office to return the substances because of the inconvenience of and difficulty in dispatching them by post.

We shall inform Count Efimovskii's landowner's office of the decisions and their substance regarding the peasants Fedotov and Stepanov, inform the Medical Office, and submit the verdicts to His Highness the Governor for his approval.

4.12 THE MOB MURDER OF AGRAFENA DMITRIEVNA CHINDIAIKINA, A SUSPECTED WITCH (1880)

Source: L. Vesin, "Narodnyi sud nad ved'mami (K istorii narodnykh obychaev)," *Severnyi vestnik* (September 1892), part II: 68–69.

Extralegal justice against suspected witches in imperial Russia proved difficult to track unless it was reported to the authorities. Given the chronic understaffing of Russia's provinces for much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, we only occasionally get a glimpse into the phenomenon. After emancipation and the withdrawal of the courts from investigating charges of witchcraft, cases of mob violence against witches increased

as villagers could no longer "achieve satisfaction" within the legal system.[36] Brutal cases of vigilante justice, called in Russian "samosud," or self-justice, also occurred against suspected horse thieves and arsonists, whom villagers believed were insufficiently punished by the authorities. The following horrifying example of mob violence against a suspected witch occurred in 1880 in the village of Mordovskie Parki in Penza Province, located almost 450 miles southeast of Moscow. It was one of four reported instances of extralegal justice against suspected witches and sorcerers that resulted in murder in that province for that year. The description comes from the pen of the legal ethnographic writer L. Vesin, who scoured newspaper sources for such items. Unfortunately, the report does not shed light on the punishments meted out to the perpetrators of the mob violence. In a similar case of the murder of a suspected sorceress in Novgorod Province in 1877, the three plaintiffs who confessed to committing the act received sentences of religious penance, while the remaining thirteen, who pleaded innocent, were acquitted.[37]

Agrafena Dmitrievna Chindiaikina was a neighbor of the peasant Aleksei Chindiaikin and passed herself off as a sorceress (*koldunia*) by walking about the yards of local residents with her hair undone and climbing down ladders into their cellars in order to bewitch people. On the night of April 21–22, before dawn, she set off for Aleksei Chindiaikin's home and climbed into his cellar. By happenstance Chindiakin was in his yard and saw her. He summoned his family members, pulled her out of the cellar by the hair, and began beating her with a stake. Responding to Chindiaikin's shouting, neighbors came running and also began to beat the sorceress. Afterward, to prevent her from running away, they tied her to a post with the reins of a horse.

Having been awakened by the noise and shouting, Ignatii Arkhipov, a quiet man and Chindiaikina's father-in-law, went outside and ran into Chindiaikin's yard. When he saw Aleksei Chindiaikin, his son Ivan, Aleksei Fedorov Chindiaikin, Timofei Leontev Dobikov, and Egor Andreev Dobikov beating Agrafena with stakes, he implored them to come to their senses, but the crowd of people that had rushed there shouted, "Beat her! Break her arms and legs!" After that the beatings became more severe.

When the village authorities arrived on the scene, they put an end to the peasants' savagery (*neistovstvo*), but it was too late. Chindiaikina showed no signs of life.

4.13 A WOMAN ACCUSED OF SORCERY HAS HER DAY IN COURT (EARLY 1900S)

Source: Sergei Terent'evich Semenov, *Dvadtsat'-piat' let v derevne* (Petrograd, 1915), 112–15.

Sergei Terentevich Semenov, an innovative peasant farmer who became a writer and Tolstoyan, left a memoir of his life in the small village of Andreevskoe and neighboring villages located in Volokolamsk District, Moscow Province. Known at the turn of the twentieth century for its intensive flax production, the region is located about eighty miles west of Moscow. In his memoir Semenov provides an extraordinary personal observation and recollection of a trial at the volost or canton court level involving a woman who accused two villagers of spreading false rumors that she was a sorceress. For other cases against slanderous accusations of witchcraft, see Documents 4.2 and 4.9, the latter of which turns out very differently for the plaintiff. Unfortunately, in the observation below Semenov does not date the case, but it appears to have followed quickly on the heels of the discovery of a gravesite in 1899 in the village of Cherlenkovo. The grave was believed to have been the resting place of a holy person named Filipp, who became known as the Cherlenkovo miracle-worker, prompting a deluge of pilgrims to the site in 1900. Pilgrims descended on Cherlenkovo on May 9 on St. Nicholas Day (commemorating the 1087 transfer of St. Nicholas's relics from Myra of Lucia to Bari, Italy), when the village's annual fair took place. Individuals suffering from a variety of ailments converged on the cemetery, believing that the earth from Filipp's grave would cure them. New earth had to be continuously applied to the gravesite. Once it became clear that true healings were not in fact taking place, this flow of pilgrims eventually petered out, much to the relief of church authorities who frowned upon spontaneous noncanonical cults.[38] It was in the midst of growing numbers of pilgrims to Cherlenkovo, among them victims of demonic possession who believed their affliction arose from the machinations of witches or sorcerers, that the peasant woman Marfa of a neighboring village was accused of sorcery and implanting demons in villagers.

After the 1861 emancipation of the serfs, volost courts were set up all over European Russia to deal with various petty crimes and civil issues affecting emancipated peasants. Headed by peasant judges elected by their fellow villagers, they were designed to respect customary law and practices among peasants until such time as the written law could be modified to reflect aspects of customary practices. In fact, the merging of written and customary law never took place, as it proved impossible to systematize customary law and practices when these varied not only from province to province but also from village to village. Literate volost court scribes, who were peasants as well, did introduce provisions of the written law to villagers, but the volost courts enjoyed complete autonomy until 1889, when the introduction of land captains attempted to impose some order over the courts. The land captains now appointed judges from

peasants' nominations, but they nonetheless still came from the peasantry. They also selected the clerks. Judges continued to enjoy leeway in applying unwritten local customs but were to do so in accordance with their conscience. A full appeals procedure was also put into place from 1889 onward so that peasants could challenge volost court rulings.

Once I arrived at the volost administrative office (*in Kaleevo*) to deal with some matters, I happened to come on the day the volost court was meeting, and I happened to hear one case that arose as a result of the [discovery of the grave] of the Cherlenkovo miracle-worker. A peasant woman named Marfa of Diatlovo—a neighboring village to Cherlenkovo—had launched a complaint against her co-villagers Illarion and his daughter-in-law Anna for spreading rumors that she, Marfa, was a sorceress. Because of that accusation her position in the village had become untenable. She lived alone and constantly feared that she would become the victim of a mob court.

"Gentlemen judges, can you imagine how I must now live?" Marfa asked. "I am old and as a result haven't become more appealing. People shun me. They curse me when I unexpectedly pass someone on the street. Kids taunt me; if they see a cat run toward me, they think it's an evil spirit. I can't sleep or rest easy, although I am prepared to take an oath [that I'm not a witch], while they continue to talk about me. Because of that I fear the worst day and night."

"Why do they accuse you of this?" asked the chair. "Did something spark this?"

"It began this way: pilgrims went by us on their way to Cherlenkovo. One time some stayed over night in our village. Among them were some bewitched individuals. One landless peasant, our Domna, liked to take them in. The bewitched people started to shriek that there were bewitched persons in our village. And sure enough, some of our people started to shriek as well. And they began to complain that I had bewitched them. One time there was a village assembly. After the meeting the elder came to me and said, 'Marfa, the male peasants want you to come to Ilia Petrov's. Let's go!'—'I'll go! I don't wish people ill!'

We go to Ilia Petrov's. He lights the votive candles, opens a holy book, and says, 'Well, Orthodox people, a sinful matter—demonic possession—

has appeared among us. Here is a prayer to read over them. I will read the prayer while you look at the person who released demons upon them, and that person will have to undo it.'[39] He started to read and we started to pray. Everyone looked at me. I didn't look at anyone. Suddenly, just as the ill persons started to act wildly, Anna outdid them by naming me a sorceress, after which the others followed. They exploded with rage at me.

Larion then said: 'Let them approach her. Let them scratch her.'

At this point the village elder thankfully stood up for me. Anna went further than before, saying, 'She's a witch. She has bewitched twenty people in the village. At the beginning of harvest time she makes diagonal cuts in the grain in secret at night in order to spoil the harvests of others, while ensuring that her own harvest is good. And she bewitches grain in order to bring misfortune and illness upon its owners.' At this point they all started to stare at me like angry bears.

"Defend me, righteous judges, don't let me be subject to injury."

"What stupidity!" exclaimed the chair. "How can you slander someone like that? Why did that fool Ilia proceed with such an event at his home? Summon Larion."

Larion, a bearded peasant with a blue-gray nose, testified that he did not intend to insult Marfa, and if anyone says otherwise, they are just repeating his daughter-in-law's words.

They summoned his daughter-in-law. Anna is a young married woman but already has lips that have gone blue and an expression of suffering carved on her face. In response to the question of why she called Marfa a sorceress, her facial expression suddenly changed and she began to stamp her leg hard, and in a hysterical voice shrieked: "She bewitched me. She's a sorceress. She's damned. It's her! It's her! It's her! Come on, I'll beat her. Come on, I'll strangle her!"

The woman thrashed about in an alarmingly savage manner and roared at Marfa. Several men grabbed her and took her out into the entrance hall, where she continued to howl and thrash about. They could not get her to calm down for quite some time. Marfa became pale. The judges had become

afraid. The clerk was the only one who showed some courage. He said, “You should give her something strong to drink—don’t be afraid.”

“Today that isn’t done,” said the chair. “Previously we treated people to drink.”[40]

“Righteous judges, you heard this,” said Marfa with tears in her eyes. “How can I put up with this?”

“What can we do? This is obviously your cross to bear. You must bear it,” the chairman consoled her.

“Why do I have to suffer this?”

“That is God’s will!”

The questioning of the witnesses began. There were three (*the minimum required*). They tried to prove Larion’s innocence and clearly explained that if people call Marfa this, it couldn’t be unfounded. It couldn’t be wrong for all these people to shriek against her.

The village elder confirmed that all of this shrieking started when some pilgrim, who was herself possessed, stayed at Domna’s. She had Domna give these women some herbal concoction to drink, and after that they started to shriek and screech out Marfa’s name.

The judges were informed that Anna had calmed down. They ordered that Marfa be removed from the room and summoned Anna. Anna was calm and began to talk unaffectedly, saying that she feels inside her something horrible, something excruciatingly painful, something that tears at her. More precisely, a man is tossing and turning inside her, and when she shrieks she can’t remember anything. In response to the question of why she thinks Marfa bewitched her, Anna loses her composure at the very mention of Marfa’s name and once again experiences a fit. Screwing up her eyes, she shouts, “It’s her. It’s her doing. She is damned!”—and a whole lot of swear words come out of her mouth. They again took her out.

The judges did not want to appear irresponsible, so they found Anna guilty and sentenced her to seven days in the volost administration jail for insisting on her slander of Marfa.

PART II

MAGICAL PRACTICES, EVERYDAY MATTERS, AND THE POWER OF WORDS

Trial Excerpts

This part clusters cases thematically rather than chronologically or regionally, with the goal of highlighting and comparing particular aspects of witchcraft belief, practice, and prosecution. Given the complexities of witchcraft beliefs, an individual case might fit one or more thematic categories. To avoid repetition, the placement of any given case in a specific category is intended to feature a salient aspect of that document.

Chapter 5

HEALING AND HARMING

Healing and its immediate counterpart, harming, occupy the number one spot in magical repertoires. Those who healed were often presumed to have the capacity to harm, and the evidence in these cases suggests that one person's perception could differ sharply from another's in explaining the motives and the nature of healing or harming practices. In all of these instances, it is critical to weigh the evidence and to consider how it was elicited: whether through the use of torture, with its distorting effects, or by interrogation and intimidation, with their own attendant problems. In any case, the recorded testimony reveals what passed as culturally plausible accusations and confessions.

In the societies of early modern Russia and Ukraine, where a host of diseases and illnesses were endemic and a scientific understanding of bacteria and viruses several centuries away, households typically kept dried roots and plants of various types for medicinal purposes. Ordinary women and men harvested them in the fields and forests and were knowledgeable about them. More specialized roots and grasses and accompanying spells could be acquired from healers and sorcerers. The cornucopia of roots and plants mentioned in this volume provides a catalog of plants that were cultivated in garden plots and those that grew wild in fields and forests.

Some plants were thought to have magical properties; they could detect buried treasure or witches, divine the future, or bring good luck, among other things. As in other parts of Europe, those special grasses and flowers had to be plucked at the most propitious times of the year, such as dawn on the day of Midsummer's Eve, when their magical properties were at their strongest. Although most plants and other materials were benign, others had poisonous properties, which, dependent on the dosage, could cause immediate or delayed harm, even death. Early modern Russians and Ukrainians of all classes also believed that perfectly safe plants and roots could be transformed into dangerous substances through the application of malefic magic. Food and drink could easily be contaminated with tainted or magical substances, but less immediate forms of contact could also exert magical effects. Any representation of a person such as dirt swept up from a person's footprint or a garment saturated with the perspiration of a targeted individual could serve as a vehicle either for maleficium or for something more benign. Human hair and nails were believed to bring either good fortune or disaster in Ukrainian lands (see Document 8.3). Finding strange roots, grasses, hair, or dirt in the crevices and doorframes of a Russian or Ukrainian abode or in the unprotected liminal space of the Russian bathhouse immediately sent chills down occupants' spines and compelled them to jog their memories as to who might wish to harm them. When had they fallen ill? Was the illness connected to these mysterious elements? What had they eaten lately? Had someone given them food? Had they quarreled with someone? Life was fragile and illnesses unexplainable except through the workings of preternatural forces. Servants, close relatives, neighbors, and passersby became easy targets of suspicion. The answers to such questions were easier to answer when a supposed healing went terribly wrong, although usually a series of poor outcomes had to occur before suspicions congealed into formal accusations. As the following cases remind us, precious animals were also in danger of being the objects of malefic magic.

5.1 CONSULTATION WITH THE DOCTORS OF THE APOTHECARY CHANCELLERY (1628)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Novgorodskii stol, stlb. 10, ll. 27–29, 86–94; N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Koldovstvo v Moskovskoi Rusi XVII veka* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Al'tshulera, 1906), no. 2, 9–12.

The investigation of Andreiko Loptunov, a peasant laborer from the Toropets region, has received quite a bit of attention from scholars in recent years, because of the involvement of educated "doctors" (*dokhtora*) from the Apothecary Chancellery in determining the nature of the mysterious root found tied to Andreiko's pendant cross.[1] Andreiko claimed that he wore the root on his cross as a curative measure (one seen also in Document 4.6), to ameliorate the "black illness," a common name for a serious illness or set of illnesses in Muscovite sources. Its symptoms varied. It could manifest patterns of behavior and physical attributes that were associated with demonic possession. These involved speaking in animal voices, blaspheming, and experiencing melancholia and debilitating convulsions. More often, the black illness involved severe mental confusion and memory loss, or referred to symptoms we now associate with depression.[2] The doctors on staff at the Apothecary Chancellery in Moscow were mostly foreign or trained in the imported medical science of the age. Given the state of Western science, their medical approach was probably no more likely to cure diseases than any indigenous folk remedies, but their credentials were far more impressive and they drew on a different, bookish tradition. The official agency of medical matters, the Apothecary Chancellery served the tsar and his family first and foremost, but it also provided health care for soldiers and servitors on a broad scale and, as this case illustrates, shared its expertise with other state agencies as needed.

The reliance on experts was not unique to this case. In other instances, the tsar's orders specified that roots or herbs should be shown to shopkeepers in the vegetable market so they could weigh in on the nature of the material evidence, or that scribes from the clerical staff should be summoned to identify the handwriting in a book of spells. The doctors' response here, however, shows the limits of such assessments and demonstrates the circular, no-exit logic that underlies magical thinking. Even when the experts attested to the harmlessness of the root in question—going so far as putting it in their mouths—the possibility of bewitchment remained. By definition, a spell or a hex could convert the most ordinary, everyday objects—porridge, kvass, beer, a harmless root, or Snow White's apple—into an agent of malevolent witchcraft.

To situate Andreiko Lopunov's peregrinations geographically, note that he came originally from Toropets, located about 270 miles west of Moscow. He went to Moscow for a while and was arrested in Rzhev, about halfway back to his home. Returned to

Moscow for imprisonment during his investigation and trial, he was eventually sent for rehabilitation and recovery through prayer to a monastery in Velikii Ustiug, almost six hundred miles northeast of Moscow.

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Mikhail Fedorovich of All Russia, your slaves Matiushka Prozorovskii and Deviatko Alekseev petition! In this year 1628 on September 8, your sovereign decree was sent to us from the Military Chancellery under the seal of Secretary Mikhailo Danilov with a gentryman of Toropets (*syn boiarskii*), Kuzma Malenitskii. And by your sovereign order we, your slaves, were ordered to question a local landholder (*pomeshchik*), Mikhailo Polibin, about whether the peasant Andreiko Loptunov was one of his peasants, and how long ago he left the estate, and whether he was sick with the black disease (*chernoiu bolezn'aia*), and whether the father and mother and wife and children of that man are still among his peasants. We were ordered to question him in truth about all of this. And we were commanded to write up what he says and send it to you in Moscow.

And we, your slaves … did all that … and wrote it up and sent it to you in Moscow, signed by his, Mikhailo's, hand, on September 18 of this year, 1628, and we sent the report to the Military Chancellery to your state secretary Fedor Likhachev and Mikhailo Danilov.

September 11, 1628, by your sovereign order … we questioned the landholder Mikhailo Polibin, and he said: Andreiko Loptunov was his peasant, and he was seized by the black illness (*cherny nedug*), and petitioned him, Mikhailo, and asked that he be released to pray to God and to go around to holy sites, and if the illness didn't lighten, then he would go to a monastery to take religious orders. And on account of his illness, Mikhailo released him to pray to God in 1628 from spring to summer, and his father and mother are still with him as peasants, as are his wife and children. Mikhailo Polibin said all this and the clerk Deviatoi Alekseev signed for him.

Written in report

In 1628 on July 14, Governor Prince Afanasii Kozlovskii wrote to the sovereign from Rzhev Volodimirov: On June 28, Rzhev musketeers brought

to him in the governor's office a Russian laborer (*privodnyi chelovek*), who was passing around the city along the upper bank of the Volga River on the Old Toropets Road. In questioning, the laborer said his name is Andreiko Loptunov, Bisak's son, peasant of the landlord Mikhailo Polibin. He said he left Toropets and went to Moscow to feed himself (*that is, to earn a living*), and he lived in Moscow for about five weeks, but he didn't name the people he stayed with. And he didn't spend time in any other towns, and now he's going back to Toropets. And he doesn't know anybody in Rzhev. On his cross was tied a root.

On July 15, by the sovereign's order Governor Kozlovskii was ordered to send that man Andreiko Loptunov to the sovereign in Moscow with a guard. And on July 29, that man Andreiko was sent from Rzhev to Moscow. And in Moscow Andreiko Loptunov was questioned, and he said he is from Toropets Province and is Mikhailo Polibin's peasant. In 1628 in the springtime, he left across fields and water and left Mikhailo Polibin and went to Moscow to feed himself through working, and he lived in Moscow about five weeks and fed himself through working, and he lived across the Moscow River with the townsman Levka, but who Levka's master is or what he trades, that he doesn't know. He was heading back from Moscow to Toropets as of old, and three days before St. Peter's Day (*June 29*), he came to Rzhev. And in Rzhev he was caught outside the city by musketeers, and they took him to the governor, and the governor ordered him placed under guard. The root that he has tied to his cross was given to him by a man he met along the road, but he doesn't know what town the man came from. The man gave the root to him because he, Andreiko, was sick with the black illness, and he had enough for a month, and his father and mother and wife and two sons and a daughter now live in Toropets Province with Mikhailo Polibin.

(*After providing this testimony,*) Andreiko was put in jail pending the sovereign's order.

. . . (*An order states that*:) The root should be taken and shown to doctors (*dokhtura*) and in the jail, investigate to determine whether that man actually had the black illness.

And the root that was taken from the man Andreiko Loptunov was shown in the Apothecary Chancellery to doctors. And Doctor Valentin with his colleagues, having looked at the root, said that that root is gooseflesh (*gusina plot*) and is useful as medicine. There is nothing evil in it, and they even put that root in their mouths. But it could be that if someone wanted to do criminal mischief (*vorovat'*), he could work some evil over a good root and turn it evil through spells. They don't know if this root is hexed. And a prison attendant, Mikhailo Petritkov, and prison trustees and other prisoners said: when that man Andreika was put in jail, he was in the grip of the black illness for a day or two, but now the illness grips him everyday, and that same man Andreiko when he was put in jail was somnolent….

Resolution

1628 on October 28, the sovereign ordered that man sent to the Archangel Monastery in Ustiug Velikii and ordered him to be given manual labor to do at the monastery and not to let him out of the monastery so that he would not disappear without a trace, and order him to attend church services, so that God might give him relief from his illness. (*A note documents that this was carried out.*)

5.2 A CASE OF ENCHANTED BREW (1653)

Source: RGADA f. 210, Belgorodskii stol, stlb. 369, ll. 231–36;
Novombergskii, *Koldovstvo v Moskovskoi Rusi,* no. 18, 80–83.

In the archives of the Military Chancellery (*Razriadnyi prikaz*) a fragment of a trial reveals high-level concern about poisoning or bewitchment by administering drink adulterated with a mysterious grass. The record is incomplete, and it involves a dizzying cast of characters enumerated with all of their ranks, their paternity, and their nicknames. Reading through the confusion, however, shows some interesting features of the case. First, it involves an absolutely quotidian event gone wrong: the hospitable act of sharing a drink with guests takes an unfortunate turn. Primarily set within the walls of a monastery,

it also shows a world of interaction between clerics and lay people, a porous world of male sociability. The participants' testimony raises questions about the "unidentified grasses" and the casual way they seem to have been administered to others. To what end is unclear.

The case further illustrates standard legal practice for all formal complaints lodged with the authorities, whether involving sorcery or not. The complainant would address a petition directly to the tsar but would bring it to the local government representative, in this case, to the local governor or voevoda for an initial hearing. Petitioning could take oral or written form. In this case, we seem to have one of each of these variants: Priest Vasilii's petition was written, while Musketeer Ivashko's was oral. The governor would then write up a report on the case, including a verbatim transcript or copy of the initial complaint, and await instructions from the central authorities. The answering command was always phrased as if coming from the tsar himself. In actual practice, by the seventeenth century decisions were most often made within the various chancelleries in Moscow.

After questioning the various suspect parties, the governor reports placing them under the guard of various officials "on surety." Suretyship (*poruka*) was an important part of Muscovite legal practice. Suspects were sometimes handed over to guards or court officials who then would have to confine them in their own homes and be responsible for keeping track of them. Other suspects or convicts would be released on promise of good behavior if they could find upstanding community members who would sign notes to guarantee their good conduct. In either case, if the suspect then escaped or failed to live up to his or her promise, the guarantors or sureties would have to pay substantial fines or even endure physical punishment. With such weighty consequences for failing to control someone else's behavior, people did not sign such documents lightly.

To Tsar and Great Sovereign Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, your slave Mishka Ushakov petitions. On October 22 of this year, 1653, Vasilii, priest of St. Peter's Church of the Petrovskii Monastery of the town of Mtsensk (*about two hundred miles south of Moscow*) submitted a petition to you, Sovereign, and also to me in the governor's office. In his complaint, he denounced the hegumen's son Anichko and Pankratii's son, Ivashka, sexton of the Assumption Church. And in the governor's office in questioning before me he said: His (*Vasilii's*) sons Filka and Ivashka were at the monastery, and they went to the hegumen in his cell to get some keys, and while they were there the hegumen's son Anichka and Ivashko, the sexton of the Assumption Church, brought them some home-brewed beer (*braga*) to drink, and in the brew was mixed in a poisonous grass or potion of an unknown kind, and they, having drunk that grass, went out of their minds.

That same day Ivashko Sazeev, musketeer of Mtsensk District, petitioned to you, Sovereign, and also to me in the governor's office and made an oral denunciation. He said:

> His brother Fedka came home and he started acting strange and tore at the wall and tore his own shirt. And he (*that is, Ivashko Sazeev, the musketeer*) heard that the hegumen's son Anichko and the Assumption sexton Ivashka gave him (*that is, Sazeev's brother Fedka*) an unknown kind of potion to drink at the monastery in the hegumen's cell.

I, your slave, will affix below a report of what they said when questioned before me, and I will send it to you in Moscow with the Mtsensk messenger Kondrashko Plotnikov. And while awaiting your sovereign order, I ordered the people involved in the case, the sexton's and hegumen's sons Anichka and Ivashka, the Assumption sexton, and the Mtsensk townsperson Dementii Avikhmin, handed over on surety…. And I am sending this report to the Military Chancellery to Conciliar Nobleman (*dumnyi dvorianin*) Ivan Afanasevich Gavrenev and State Secretary Semen Zaborovskii, and Secretary Grigorii Larionov and Ivan Severov….

That same day in response to the denunciation of Priest Vasilii, the governor sent the clerk of the governor's office Ananii Lependin to examine Vasilii's sons Filka and Ivashka. According to his observation, they lie without memory and without speaking, and they keep jumping up and tearing at the wall.

On October 26, 1653, Hegumen Pafnutii's son was brought to the governor's office and placed before the governor, and he said: "On October 22 of this year 1653, Pankratii's son Ivan, the sexton of the Church of the Assumption, came to us in (*the hegumen's*) cell and brought some kind of grass and sprinkled it in our drink, and I gave that drink to Priest Vasilii's sons Filipp and Ivan and to my sister, the girl Fevroshka, and to the Mtsensk musketeer Fedor Kazeev to drink. Hegumen Pafnutii signed this report in place of his son."

That same day Ivashko, son of the Assumption priest Pankratii stood before the governor and said in questioning: "In this year 1653, I was at the home of the Mtsensk resident Dementii Avikhmin at the holiday of the

Intercession of the Mother of God. At Dementii's house there is an unidentified grass that grows in his garden, and Dementii gave that grass to his guests to drink, and I, not knowing what I was doing, tore off some of that grass and brought it to Mtsensk, and I put it in a mug and gave it to the hegumen's son Anichka. And we sprinkled that grass in the brew and gave it to the Mtsensk musketeer Fedor Kazeev and Priest Vasilii's sons Filka and Ivashka."

Signed by Priest Pankratii in place of his son.

(The surviving case record ends here.)

5.3 HEALING OR CURSING? MYSTERIOUS INGREDIENTS RAISE SUSPICION (1658)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyni stol, stlb. 300, ll. 8–9.

Between 1656 and 1658, the town of Lukh, some 230 miles northeast of Moscow, witnessed the largest and longest-lasting outbreak of *klikushestvo* or shrieking yet identified in Muscovite Russia. *Klikushestvo* was understood as a state of possession often caused by witchcraft. The epidemic initiated a massive investigation conducted by special state agents appointed to identify the causes and punish the culprits responsible for the bewitchments. Sections of the lengthy report from the investigation appear as Documents 4.7 and 8.2. Not all of the witnesses in the case spoke to the immediate problem of possession, however. The openness of the investigation invited anyone with witchcraft-related concerns to come forward with their stories, whether or not they were connected to the actual issue at hand. The extract that follows, along with Document 7.2, also a tangential accusation included in the Lukh record, demonstrates that witchcraft was widely practiced, or at least suspected and feared, and accusations could readily surface at times of heightened anxiety and increased judicial receptivity.

The excerpt below provides a cryptic and unelaborated glimpse into quotidian magical practice. Neither of the offenders attempted to deny their involvement with incantations or with the simple forms of magical material—enchanted wax and roots—that their accusers attributed to them. More unusual in the Russian witchcraft trial materials was their use of the caul of an animal, which would have been believed to have had magical powers of its own, but whose powers would have been enhanced with a spell. The offenders did not feel the need to explain the purposes or functions of their enchanted

possessions. Magic, it seems, was part of their daily life, an indispensable ingredient in their recipe for survival, and as such required no explanation. The court evidently agreed and did not press the matter. The men were questioned and in one case tortured but not forced to provide explanations. Their fate is unknown.

In this year 1658 on February 14, Governor Grigorei Koisarov wrote to the sovereign from Lukh: "In this year 1658 on January 17, Attendant of the Royal Table Artem Volynskii's man Ivashko Denisov petitioned the sovereign and handed in a petition in the governor's office in Lukh, and he brought with him one of his master's men, Onoshka Ivanov." And in his petition is written: "In the past year 1656/57 he took some wax with a spell from Onoshka, and he now requests the sovereign should order this man questioned about where he got that wax. And anyone else who is incriminated should be taken and questioned as well."

Onoshka Ivanov was questioned about the wax, and in questioning he said that the wax was given to him by Ivan Kortsov's peasant Aleshka Mishanov, from Filisovsk District in Lukh Province.

Aleshka Mishanov was found and questioned about that grass and about roots and enchanted wax, and he was tortured, and in questioning he said he gave Onoshka Ivanov enchanted wax and the caul of an animal with a spell and also roots encased in wax. And he said spells over that wax and caul with a root at his house. He never gave any other spells to anyone.

5.4 THE BEWITCHMENT OF PRIEST DAVID AND HIS FAMILY BY THEIR DOMESTIC WORKERS (1676)

Source: RGADA f. 210, Belgorodskii stol, stlb. 826, ll. 81–96, Novombergskii, *Koldovstvo v Moskovskoi Rusi*, no. 26, 99–106.

The events described in this case took place in the provincial town of Dobroe, located about 250 miles south and a little west of Moscow. The dynamics of the case turn out to be quite typical for Muscovite trials. A local priest accused his domestic workers, in this case apparently not serfs but rather hired help, of bewitching him and his family through

a variety of means. The testimony does not impute any motives to the servants, but frequently such charges erupted when masters had treated their servants with particular cruelty. Here the backstory remains invisible. Further, since testimony was extracted under torture, we need to approach the "facts" of the case with caution. Only the recorded accusations and testimony remain as evidence from which we can try to reconstruct the circumstances and human relationships.

The documents include precious details about the materials (roots, grasses, fish glue, amniotic sacs or cauls), the techniques, the locations, and the actual spells employed—or thought to be employed—in magical practice. The rare individual born with the caul (v *rubashke* or *v sorochke*) was considered lucky. Preservation of the caul to ensure good luck in later life was apparently a common practice in Russia as elsewhere in premodern Eurasia. The Stoglav banned placing babies' cauls on the altar to enhance their talismanic potency.[3]

The language employed in the case record is also standard for such official documents. The stock formulas used in correspondence with the tsar and his central agencies are revealing of the dynamics of political exchange in Muscovite society. As noted elsewhere, subjects of the tsar addressed him with a clearly established language of submission, with the specific terms of self-denigration calibrated according to social standing. Male members of the elite called themselves slaves (*kholopy*) of the tsar; members of the nonelite orders called themselves his orphans (*siroty*) or sometimes used another term for slave (*rab*), stressing both their dependency and his obligation to take care of them. Clergy, like Priest David, addressed him as his "pilgrims," or literally, "those who prayed to God (*bogomol'tsy*)." Women of all ranks used the second term for slave, *raba*.

Further abasing himself before the tsar, Priest David follows standard supplicatory conventions when he employs a Russian noun form that denigrates his family and his household (*zhenishko; detishki*). Here we have translated the terms as "miserable little" wife and children to capture the sense of the language. This was a standard way of presenting one's wretchedness and pathos before the all-powerful and (hopefully) all-merciful tsar.

Even the town governor, a member of the noble elite holding appointed office as a representative of the tsar, follows the custom of abasing himself before his sovereign. When named in the third person, he is designated formally with his full name and patronymic: Timofei Leontevich Karaulov. When addressing the tsar directly in his own voice, however, he selects a diminutive, self-denigrating form of his first name (Timoshka), without patronymic. This works as a corollary of the elite etiquette of calling themselves slaves of the tsar.

Initial report from the governor (*voevoda*) of Dobroe to Tsar Fedor Alekseevich

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Fedor Alekseevich, your slave Timoshka Karaulov, governor of the town of Dobroe, petitions. In this year 1676 on March 11, David, the priest of the Church of the Mother of God of

the town of Dobroe, brought before me his hired man, Mishka Kireev, and Mishka's wife, Arinka. He said in past years and in this year on various dates, roots and dirt were found at his house in the sleeping chamber, tucked under the ceiling and stuck in the corner. And he and his wife also found those roots in their drinks, in home-brewed beer (*braga*) and kvass, and Arinka, the wife of his hired man Mishka, brought those drinks to them. And his wife and children became deathly ill from those poisonous roots. His suspicion in this matter fell on his hired man Mishka and his wife, Arinka. He asked that the tsar order them questioned.

And by your order, Sovereign, and in accordance with the priest David's petition, I questioned Mishka Kireev about the bewitchment of David's wife and children. In questioning he said:

> It is true that the dirt and roots were tucked in under the ceiling in the chamber at Priest David's house. His stepfather, the Dobroe dragoon Isaika Nekireev, stuck that root and dirt in the house in 1675 during Holy Week, so that the Priest David and his whole family would wither away. And from the withering disease, they all fell deathly ill. And Mishka's wife, Arinka, said that she also bewitched Priest David's wife and children, girls. She gave them poisonous roots in drinks, in beer and kvass.

And following up on that denunciation, I sent a clerk from the Dobroe governor's office, Evfim Semenov, with a guard detail from the gunners' regiment, to arrest the dragoon Isaika Nekireev and his wife, Mishka's mother, Agripenka. And later that same day the clerk Evfim Semenov and the gunners brought Mishka's stepfather, Dragoon Isaika, and his wife, Agripenka, before me in the governor's office, and they also brought some crushed plants and grasses tied in twelve knots and six sacks of grasses and a spell against gunshot wounds, written in a little notebook, and a bundle of five different grasses. And the clerk and the gunners said they took these grasses and plants and the spell against gunshot wounds from Isaika Nekireev in his house. And following up on Mishka's denunciation, Isaika and his wife were questioned and tortured about the bewitchment and roots. And we are sending the Dobroe servicemen Sergei Kovrigin and comrades with all the original documents to you, Sovereign, in Moscow. They will turn them in at the Military Chancellery to State Secretaries

Semen Titov, Vasilii Semenov, and Petr Kavelin. And we ordered Mishka and his stepfather held in prison and their wives held under guard until your order arrives.

Petition of Priest David against his hired couple

(This is the original complaint that precipitated the investigation. It was forwarded to Moscow by the governor and preserved in the file:)

> To Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Fedor Alekseevich, your pilgrim, Dobroe town priest David, petitions against his hired man Mishka Kireev and Mishka's wife, Arinka. In the past year 1675/76 on various dates, roots and earth appeared at my house, tucked in under the ceiling in the corner. My suspicion in this matter of witchcraft (*volshebstvo*) and roots fell on my hired man Mishka and his wife, Arinka. And from the magic they inflicted, I, your pilgrim, and my wife and children are dying cruel deaths through illness. We found those roots in our drinks on more than one occasion. Merciful Sovereign, order my hired man Mishka and his wife questioned in the governor's office in Dobroe about the roots and bewitchment (*porcha*) to find out who gave them the roots, and who instructed them to bewitch me and my miserable little wife and children, so that those heretics do not cause me to perish altogether, with my family and with my wretched little children for no cause. And depending on what they discover, order your merciful sovereign's command carried out. Tsar, Sovereign, have mercy on me! Grant my request.

(*On reverse:*) Priest David of the Church of the Mother of God signed this petition with his hand.

(The following orders from Moscow are also jotted on the reverse side of the petition.)

1676 on March 11: Order the governor to investigate as requested in the petition.

1676 on April 13: Write out reports with any information regarding this matter immediately.

(Then follows a recap of events to date, beginning with Priest David's submitting his petition to Governor Timofei Leontevich Karaulov.)

Governor Karaulov begins the investigation in Dobroe

On March 11, 1676, the young laborer (*privodnyi detina*) Mishka Kireev was questioned about the bewitchment that Priest David charged him with, and he said:

> there were roots and earth that were tucked into his, David's, house under the ceiling. His stepfather Isaika Nekireev stuck them there so that Priest David and his whole family would dry up and wither, and from that withering they became deadly ill.

And this year during Lent, Mishka put roots on the shelf by the stove in the main chamber in Priest David's house so that Priest David and his family would dry up and wither, and from that withering disease, they would die. And Mishka's stepfather, Isaiko, and his mother, Agripenka, gave him that root and told him to bewitch them. And Mishka's wife, Arinka, mixed the roots into the drinks of the priest's wife and daughters, into their brewed beer and kvass, to kill them, and she also mixed them in their drinks this winter. His wife got those roots from his stepfather and his mother, her mother-in-law. And while Mishka was living with the priest, he collected dirt from where they had stepped, from their footsteps, and brought it to his stepfather and his mother to use for bewitchment, and he took that dirt out of the footprints where Priest David and his wife walked.

That same day Mishka's wife Arinka was questioned, and in questioning she said:

> In this year in September, she, Arinka, gave the priest's wife and daughters roots mixed into their drinks on the instruction of her mother-in-law, Agripenka. And she, Arinka, stole a headdress (*kokoshnik*) and headscarf (*podubrusnik*) from the priest's wife, and her mother-in-law told her to put the headdress and headscarf under a post while reciting a spell: "As this post is heavy, so may it be heavy on the priest's wife." And Arinka carried everything out according to her mother-in-law's instructions. As her mother-in-law told her, she also tore a scrap from the priest's wife's blouse, right where it covered her heart, and brought the scrap of fabric to her mother-in-law to use in a curse. And Arinka pulled the rings off the fingers of the priest's daughters and recited a spell: "Until marriage, may she never weave or spin with these hands." And her mother-in-law told her to do this. And her mother-in-law also told her: "as the priest's wife leaves the house, go meet her and quietly mutter a spell at her, and blow on her and she will fall over in a faint." And she carried this all out to harm the priest's wife. Signed by Ivashka Ponfilov, townsman from the town of Dobroe, in place of Mishka Kireev's wife Arina, daughter of Vasilii, by her instruction.

And the grass that priest David pulled out from the walls of his house was given to her by her mother-in-law, who told her to give that grass to the priest's wife and daughters in their drinks to bewitch them. And this year during Lent, Arinka gave the yellow grass to David's hired man Aniska, and he drank it and at this moment he is drying out and withering from it.

On the same day, March 11, Governor Timofei Karaulov sent a clerk from the Dobroe governor's office, Evfim Semenov, and the gunner Ekim Barsukov to the house of the Dobroe dragoon Isaiko Nekireev to search and investigate and to bring any grass and roots found there to the governor's office under guard. And that same day, they brought back to the governor's office a basket of various kinds of crushed grasses tied in twelve knots and four sacks of plants and grasses and a spell against gunshot wounds, written in a small notebook, and a bundle of five grasses. They reported that they took the grasses and the written spell against gunshot wounds from the home of Isai Nekireev. The clerk Efim Semenov brought them to the governor's office, and he brought Isai Nekireev himself too, and signed all of this over to the officials.

On that same day in March, after Mishka Kireev and his wife, Arinka, implicated him in their testimony, Isaika, son of Fedor Nekireev, was questioned, and he said:

> In the past 1675 year during Lent, he didn't stick any roots or earth under the ceiling at Priest David's house, and he didn't give any poisonous roots to his stepson Mishka or his daughter-in-law Arinka to use for bewitchment, and he never told his stepson and daughter-in-law to bewitch Priest David and his wife and children. Mishka and his daughter-in-law Arinka are slandering him with these accusations without any grounds. And about the root that was taken from him, Isaika said: he kept that root to protect himself from back pain and other ailments. And about the salt [that they found] tied up in a kerchief with vitriol (*copper sulphate*) and a stone: he uses that salt to wash himself and his children. And he doesn't know anything about any other spells or poisons. And he doesn't know anything about that wrapped-up sheet of fish glue (korluk, *made from boiling down fish skins*). And the spell that they took from him belonged to his wife's first husband, Kiriushka, and she brought it with her [when she married him]. To this testimony the Dobroe town square clerk (*ploshchadi d'iachek*) Pankrashka Drozzhin signed his hand by Isai's instruction.

That same day, Mishka Kireev was confronted with his stepfather Isaika in the torture chamber, and in the confrontation Mishka repeated his previous statements, and Isaiko denied everything.

And the same day, Isaika was tortured, given ten blows, and with the first shaking and with ten blows he admitted that he gave those roots to his stepson Mishka and his daughter-in-law, Mishka's wife, and told them to

bewitch Priest David and his wife and children so that they would wither and die. And he told his stepson to take dirt from the footprints where they had walked and to bring that dirt to him so that he could say a spell over it, and then he stuck it in the chamber under the ceiling so that Priest David and his wife would wither and, from that disease, would die. And he told his stepson to put roots on the shelf by the stove to cause bewitchment as well. And his stepson Mishka put a root in the cradle with David's baby grandson Ivan, so that he would die, but whether the baby died from that or not, he doesn't know. And he gave his daughter-in-law Arinka some roots and told her to put them in the drinks of Priest David and his wife and children to bewitch them. In all of this he, Isaika, is guilty before the sovereign, and he didn't bewitch anybody else.

Signed by the town square clerk Kondrashka Drozzhin.

That same day, Mishka's mother, Agripenka, was found and questioned, and in questioning she said:

> This year during Lent, she didn't give any roots to her son Mishka, and she never told him to bewitch the priest David and his wife and children. And she didn't give her daughter-in-law Arinka any poisonous roots in the fall and didn't tell her to give them anything in their drinks. And she didn't tell her to pull the rings off the fingers of David's daughters or to cast spells or perform any witchcraft. And she didn't tell her to meet the priest's wife in the house and to blow on her with incantations on her breath, and she didn't teach her daughter-in-law any spells, and she didn't tell her to tear a scrap of cloth off a blouse near the heart. She testified that her daughter-in-law was slandering her without basis.
>
> And about the [thing they thought was] a sheet of fish glue tied up with knots of hair, that is [actually] the caul in which her son Kiriushka was born, and she has kept it till this time. And she looked at the grasses that were taken from her husband at their house and she said she knows that some of them help cure illness and she named them, but about the other grasses she said she didn't know what they were.

Signed by the town square clerk Aleshka Popov, in place of Agripenka, Vasilii's daughter, Isai Nekireev's wife.

That same day, Mishka's wife, Arinka, was placed face-to-face with her mother-in-law, Agripinka, in the torture chamber, and at the confrontation Arinka identified her mother-in-law as the person who had given her the

grasses and roots and told her to feed them to the priest's wife and children, but Agrafenka denied it.

That same day, Isai's wife, Mishka's mother, Agripenka, was tortured: she was given ten blows. And with torture she admitted that she told her son Mishka and his wife to give the roots to the priest David and his wife and children in their drinks, so that they would be bewitched and die. And she told them to tear a piece of cloth from the blouse of the priest's wife, near the heart, also to use in bewitchment. And she told her to steal a headdress and headscarf and to put them under a post with a spell and to say the [following] spell: "as this post is heavy, so may the priest's wife be heavy." And she told her to meet the priest's wife in the house and to blow on her with an incantation so that the priest's wife would fall in a faint. And she told her to pull the rings off the priest's daughters' fingers and to say a spell: "so that with these hands she will not spin or weave until marriage." And all this she confessed just as stated in the accusations of her son and daughter-in-law.

Signed by the town square clerk Aleshka.

Report from Governor Timofei Karaulov

In a report written on April 13, 1676, Governor Timofei Karaulov sent to the Military Chancellery Priest David's petition against his workman (*rabotnik*) Mishka Kireev and his wife, Irina (*the formal name of Arinka*), … and the testimony taken both in questioning and under torture. And these documents were recorded in the chancellery. (*Here follows a verbatim repetition of the previous documents, as they were copied out in the chancellery.*)

And currently these bandits and magicians (*vory i charodei*) are in the jail in Dobroe.

They admit their guilt and that they committed their crimes of their own will. And they didn't bewitch anyone else.

At present those criminals and magicians are in jail in Dobroe.

And I will do with those bandits, Great Sovereign, what you order.

(The case ends here, with no resolution.)

5.5 WITCHCRAFT SUSPECTED AS THE CAUSE OF A CHILD'S DEATH (PLC, 1732)

Source: TsDIAK Ukrainy, f. 32 (Vyzhva), op. 1, spr. 5 (1726–47), ark. 229–30. Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa. We are grateful to Dysa for also sharing her transcription of the archival document with us.

The following case occurred in the small multiethnic and multiconfessional town of Vyzhva/Vyzhivka in the Polish-Commonwealth's Palatinate of Volhynia. The complaint against Olianuszka Koładyczowa/Olianushka Koliadychova for being a witch was not the first time that a complaint had been launched against her. In January 1731, her brother-in-law had charged her with falsely accusing his wife (her sister) of being a witch and calling his children the progeny of a witch. The lack of witnesses prevented the matter from going to court. It turned out that Olianuszka was not the only person who had a reputation in Vyzhva of threatening and magically "devouring" people. In April 1732, the wife of Pawel Ohorelczuk/Pavlo Ohorelchuk had accused Olianuszka's husband Fedor Koładycz/Fedir Koliadych of coming from a family of witches: she claimed that his grandmother Lomazianka (who in fact may have been his wife's grandmother) had once "devoured" two men and his mother yet another.[4] The popular belief in the hereditary nature of witchcraft comes to the fore here as well as the ease with which people acted on rumors and reputation to slander each other.

In the case against Olianuszka below, the suspiciously sudden and severe illness of a child was pinned upon the woman after she had verbally threatened the well-being of that child and Daniel Czyżewski's/Danylo Chyzhevskyi's other children. Fearing his child's imminent death, the father petitioned the king's magistrates. The magistrates appear to have done a thorough job in checking out all aspects of the complaints, including Czyżewski's alleged beating of Olianuszka. The case ends at that point without any further investigation, presumably because there was an insufficient number of credible witnesses to the altercation between plaintiff and defendant.

The accused witch, Olianuszka, can be interpreted in differing ways: as either a forceful woman using her reputation for witchcraft to assert herself in her community or as a victim of her neighbors' spite and her accuser's violence. Olianuszka's threats suggested that she presented herself as a woman to be reckoned with, turning a liability—her descent from a line of reputed witches—to a strength. If, as one witness claimed, Olianuszka was seen at the moment of the child's death wearing only a chemise, that may further support the hypothesis that she was playing on her sinister reputation: appearing in public in a state of partial undress or with uncovered or unbound hair constituted a violation of modesty in both Ukraine and Russia and was strongly associated with witches or prostitutes (see Documents 4.8 and 4.12).

At the same time, we should be cautious of a triumphalist reading of Olianuszka as an autonomous agent. While this is an appealing reading, the recurrent references to beatings remind us that this was a violent society where both curses and blows constituted routine elements of social interaction, and where unquestioned gender hierarchies conferred on men the right to beat women with some degree of impunity.

The colorful verb "to devour" in this case refers to a person's destruction by a horrible, sometimes fatal illness that a witch had allegedly dispatched upon that individual through magic. For a 1648 Muscovite example of the threat of devouring and its meanings within the context of witchcraft, see Document 6.2.

On August 18, 1732: The case between Daniel Czyżewski and Fedor Koładycz was presented before us, Mayors Tomasz Zdaniewicz/Tomash Zdanevych and Philip Lebednicki/ Filip Lebednytskyi, and investigators Daniel Olifirowicz/Olyfyrovych and Piotr Popowicz/Petro Popovych, concerning Koładycz's wife's threats, which, according to the plaintiff, led to the death of his child.

Daniel Czyżewski came before our castle supreme court to testify against Fedor Koładycz and his wife. He complained about these people, saying "that Koładycz's wife, Olianuszka, having forgotten the fear of God and severity of Magdeburg Law, after a quarrel with him, Daniel, began to abuse and insult him. Then she started to threaten his children's health, and other people heard the threat." He testified that:

> I was witness to the fact that she threatened that my children would not survive the next day. This happened on a Monday afternoon. Four days later, one of my children who had been healthy the previous night became very ill for no reason by the evening, and in three days its soul went to God. Before the child died, I went to the court outside the castle (*where court hearings were often heard*) to ask them to send someone to witness how severely and seriously ill my child was because of some unusual ailment. They dispatched the steward Waska Kołtaczyk/Vaska Koltachuk from the castle. When he and I were going to my house, I asked the Jewish woman Elowa Syswa/Elova Sysla for a quarter-liter (?) of vodka. And she told me: "Sirs, there will be a sign if that child dies because of an evil deed committed by a human—there will be a blue sign on its back and a white one on its chest, but if it dies because of God's will, there will be no sign." When we came to my house, my child was dead. I left my house, when the defendant herself passed by my gates. I told her: "You are godless! Aren't you afraid of God? When will you give me some peace? You made my child die! Get out of my sight!" And she, out of evil obstinacy, replied: "I wish the same thing had happened to you or your older children!"—and other people heard this. When the steward ordered some women to check for the signs that the Jewish woman had mentioned, they uncovered the child and saw a sign on its back.

The steward came to the castle to testify under oath and repeated the same thing before us.

In the meantime, the plaintiff complained that the defendant continues to threaten him without remorse to this day. He is afraid and asks permission to have his complaint recorded in the books before the investigation starts.

Fedor/Fedir Berens's wife, Oximka/Okhimka, came to testify about the same complaint. She said under oath: "I was present in Daniel Czyżewski's house when his child died. And when Czyżewski left the house crying, Fedor Koładycz's wife, wearing only a chemise, was passing by the gates. He told her: 'You devoured (*ziadła*) my child. Go away!' She answered: 'And you bastard, I wish the same thing had happened to you and your other children!' And out of despair he rushed up to her and hit her."

His Excellency the administrator ordered the defendants to appear before him. The husband Fedor Koładycz appeared, but the wife did not want to because she had been severely beaten. To investigate, His Excellency the administrator dispatched his stewards. Several officials went there and reported that they did not see any sign of a beating.

We ordered that this be written down in the books; so it was written.

5.6 A CASE OF MILK MAGIC: BORROWED POTS AND BEWITCHED COWS (PLC, 1728-31)

Source: TsDIAK Ukrainy, f. 50 (Satanivs'kyi magistrat), op. 1, spr. 3 (1728–31), ark. 123–26 (June 21, 1730). Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa. We are grateful to Dysa for also sharing her transcription of the archival document with us.

This is an unusual case in which two women accused each other of having bewitched their respective cows and the town magistrates of Satanow/Sataniv in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's Palatinate of Podolia/Podillia (which is in modern-day

Ukraine's southwestern region) agreed to investigate both charges. The women are identified in the case as Stanisław Olszewski's/Stanyslav Olshevskyi's wife Agneszka/Agneshka and Wasyl Susł's/Vasyl Susl's wife Małanka, from the village Weselec/Veselets. What is not unusual about the case is the fact that it revolves around milk magic, which was fully integrated in everyday practices and rituals in early modern Ukrainian as well as Polish villages (see Figure 5 for a modern folkloric depiction of a Ukrainian witch and her milk magic). As the most precious commodity in a household's possession, a milk cow symbolized a household's well-being. As such it was believed to be particularly susceptible to a witch's jealousy and machinations, which could result in the cow's running dry. Consequently, Ukrainian and Polish lore was replete with all sorts of prophylactic rituals to protect cows against malefic magic as well as "unwitching" rituals that would reverse the magic and make cows produce milk again. If one household's milk cow was particularly productive, a less fortunate neighbor might suspect that her cow had been robbed of some of its milk. Michael Ostling's observations about milk theft in early modern Poland applies equally to its Ukrainian lands: "there is only so much fortune, or prosperity, or fertility to go around, and one cannot acquire more than one's share except by stealing it from others. The image of the limited good may be treated as the key metaphor of the 'common language' of Polish witchcraft, while milk—its lack or overabundance, its theft and preservation—stands as the central synecdoche for the imagined activities of witches and the real practices of those who would protect themselves from witchcraft."[5] Interestingly, Małanka (referred to in the text as Susł's wife) in the case below denies practicing witchcraft in spite of the elaborate steps of sympathetic magic she took to restore her cow's milk, saying that she did so for her own benefit without wishing to harm others. The light sentencing that the magistrates gave Małanka for milk magic reflected their dismissal of it as a frivolous matter, no doubt because it was so ubiquitous.

Figure 5: Iurii Vasyl'ovych Didenko, "A Witch," sketch from the series "Ukrainian Demons," 1987, http://artkavun.kherson.ua/ua-gallery-didenko_jurij_vasilevich.htm.

Investigation by the town court of Satanow, begun on June 21, 1730

With her husband's agreement, the honorable Agneszka launched a complaint against Małanka, Wasyl Susł's wife, in the town court of Satanow.

She said:

Three years ago when my husband was scything grass, I cooked some porridge for him. Afterward, I dispatched my servant girl Kataryna to put the pot in the nearby water (*possibly a reference to the Skvila River*). Susł's wife's children somehow got wind of this, found the pot, and took it to their hut. While I was worrying about the pot, my neighbor Mohilicka/Mohylytska told me that Susłycha's/Suslykha's children took it home. After I learned that, I went to Susłycha's house and recognized my pot sitting on a bench. I said: "Give me that pot because I need it." I went home with it. I put some butter from my cow—butter I planned to sell—in the pot and later gave it to Susłycha. (*In later testimony, it turns out that Agneszka gave Małanka a different pot.*) Then Susłycha came to me, complaining that after she used the pot, her cow stopped giving milk. She asked me for advice. I said that people had advised me to put some juniper and frankincense under the lock on the gates and to turn the lock upside down. I brought her some juniper and frankincense but she didn't want to take them. Two weeks later, Susłycha sent her servant girl to me. She came to my house at noon when my husband and I were measuring milk. And she told us: "I've heard about it, and Susłycha told me to ask you if the milk from your cow smells bad. Because people say so." About two weeks later, the milk in fact began to stink. And that same year before the Ruthenian (*Ukrainian*) feast of Epiphany, my cow gave birth to some kind of monster instead of a calf and the cow was feeding that monster with clean milk. In two or three weeks, Susłycha's cow also had a calf, and after that my cow's milk began to smell bad again.

Then we summoned Susłycha, and she testified as follows:

Three or four years ago before the Ruthenian feast of St. Nicholas (*December 6*), when the night turned from Sunday to Monday, Olszewska came to my house to borrow a pot, which I was using in place of a bucket to milk cows and store milk. She borrowed it and then brought me a new one in exchange for the old one. That same day, I used that pot and my cow didn't give any milk. The next day, I told my husband about it, and he reproached me. So I took the new pot back to Olszewska. While complaining and weeping, I asked her to give me back the borrowed pot. She responded that she had sold it along with some butter. I subsequently left her house. That year, I did not have any dairy products because my cow was dry. I asked neighbors for advice about what to do when a cow doesn't give any milk. And Zdyrka's wife Iwanicha/Ivanykha advised me, saying: "Take the first loaf of bread of the day out of the oven and cut it on one side, sprinkle that side with woman's milk, and put it outside in the dew before sunrise." So I asked Mohilicka to share her breast milk. Then I fed the bread to the cow. And after that, I rubbed some manure between my cow's horns and her thighs, that is—on her back. (I did it not out of some witchcraft, but only for my own benefit—not to offend or harm other people.) That same day, my cow ran to Olszewska's yard … And up to this day, the cow gives milk as it should."

Then Susłycha was asked if she bewitched or spoiled Olszewska's dairy products with her sorcery. And she answered that she knew nothing about that sort of thing.

Iwan Zdyrka's wife testified:

> Małanka came to my sister Nastia Zkonoweczka's/Skonovychka's place to ask for some whey. My sister said: "But you have your own cow to milk." Małanka answered: "My cow's milk is blocked, which means that I can't make anything." Then I advised her to cut the first loaf of bread and sprinkle it with woman's milk, put it in the dew, and then feed it to the cow.

But she (*Zdyrka's wife*) did not admit that she had said anything about smearing the cow with manure and other things. She was also asked from whom she had learned that method. She answered that she had heard it from various people.

Wasył Susł from the village of Weselec was asked how and for how many years had he lived with his wife. He testified that he had lived in Weselec for twenty years. "I married my first wife when I was (*text unclear*)." He was asked if he had observed his wife doing anything suggestive of witchcraft. He answered that he had not seen anything like that. He testified under oath.

Stanisław Olszewski testified that his cow had given birth to a calf whose head was like that of a calf, but whose body was cat-like and its fur dog-like. And he didn't see its legs.

(In the end the judges ordered Małanka to pay ten hryven to the castle authorities for her "frivolous" or superstitious actions regarding her cow. When they dispatched investigators to the village to find out if she had ever practiced any witchcraft or sorcery, residents answered in the negative. Given her superstitious acts that bordered on witchcraft, Małanka had to swear that not only had she never practiced witchcraft, but that she would also not practice it in the future.)

5.7 AN ALLEGED MURDER BY WAY OF WITCHCRAFT (1844–45)

Source: GAVO, f. 175, op. 2, d. 42 (1844–45), ll. 11–11 ob., 12–12 ob., 17, 18, 20–20 ob., 25 ob.–26, 35, 39–39 ob.

A serious case came to the attention of the Vologda court of equity on November 3, 1844, involving the suspicious sudden death of the peasant Kiril Bazhukov in February 1844, in the rural community of Trinity Pecherskoe in Ust-Sysolsk District. Community members attributed his death to witchcraft. From his deathbed, the alleged victim had accused Anna Bazhukova (who apparently was unrelated to him despite a shared surname) of bewitching him when she supposedly fell on his chest during the celebration of Butter Week (Shrovetide). Because of a quarrel between Anna's mother, Agafia Sergeeva Bazhukova, and her neighbors at about the same time, charges of witchcraft had been levied against both mother and daughter. The denunciation as well as the partial testimonies of the plaintiff and witnesses at the local level are provided below to demonstrate the ways in which community members searched their memories and constructed a case against the two women. Fortunately for Anna and her mother, Bazhukov's body had been disinterred on July 13 and autopsied. The thorough medical examination found no traces of poison in Bazhukov's body, and a search of Agafia's home did not unearth any items that could bring harm to either people or animals. Even if Anna had fallen on Bazhukov's chest, the doctor surmised, she could not have had a deleterious effect on his health. After reviewing all the materials, which also included the local parish priest's report on the churchgoing practices of the plaintiff, defendants, and key witnesses, the members of the court of equity sought additional information from the Vologda Consistory concerning Anna's status at birth. The parish metrical records listed Anna as having been illegitimate. Orthodox strictures against premarital sex might explain in part the villagers' animus against both mother and daughter and the allegations that they had dabbled in witchcraft. Not all Russian peasant communities necessarily condemned premarital sex in this fashion or suspected its practitioners and their illegitimate offspring of witchcraft, but it is possible that this stigma added to the villagers' suspicions in this case. On March 9, 1845, the court finally took the humane step of absolving both mother and daughter of suspicions of witchcraft. The judges ruled in accordance with the law that belief in witchcraft was a "silly superstition" and dismissed accusations that were based on unsubstantiated rumors. However, they warned Anna that she would remain under serious suspicion of having attacked Bazhukov, in spite of her denial, on the basis of the testimony of a single eyewitness. The court's recommendation was approved by the governor's office.[6]

The denunciation of May 4, 1844

The peasant woman Anisia Antonova Pystina made the following declaration to the jurisdiction of the Trinity Pecherskoe state peasant community:

> Rumors about the soldier's wife Agafia Sergeeva Bazhukova and her daughter Anna spread throughout the community that they used fetishes (*feticheskim obrazom*) to bewitch and make my neighbors and nearby residents ill. In February of this year, Kiril Bazhukov, a peasant of this community, died of an extraordinary swelling on his chest and throat over the course of a mere twenty-four-hour period. As he was dying, he informed many people that he had been bewitched by Bazhukova's daughter Anna, either during the celebration of Shrovetide this year or earlier. She had acted indecently by pressing on his chest. Later that day, my neighbors and I witnessed a quarrel between Bazhukova and her daughter, on one hand, and many peasants, both men and women, on the other hand. The latter accused them of bewitching people and being responsible for Kiril Bazhukov's death. During that incident, we saw two mysterious birds fly under the hems of the gathered people's skirts and around their legs. That Bazhukova accused me of being the one who bewitched the villagers' animals and even people. Her evidence amounts to a complete lie. My husband scolded and threatened me, ordering me to seek restitution for such an insult from the authorities…. Our daughter-in-law Fedosia has been ill this winter and spring from bewitchment, but we don't know who bewitched her.

Excerpts from testimonies under oath on July 10 and 12, 1844

(A total of twenty-seven people besides the two defendants were questioned.)

[The plaintiff,] forty-six-year-old illiterate and childless Anisia Antonova Pystina, wife of the peasant Ivan Markov Pystin of the Pafskoe community, who is of the Orthodox faith and regularly confesses to the priest Popov of the Pafskii parish and takes communion and who has never been fined or awarded damages by a court, (*went beyond her deposition by adding the following information:*) during the quarrel with Bazhukova, Paraskovaia Stefanova Pystina, Avdotia Stefanova Pystina, Avdotia Emelianova Pystina, and Avdotia Nikiforova Kazakova witnessed the type of birds that flew down among the people, and they could speak to what they saw. She suspects that Bazhukova's daughter Anna has some kind of malevolent knowledge because once when she, Anisia, was trying to light a fire in her bathhouse, the girl walked by, and then although she made several more

attempts, she was still unable to light the fire. When the girl walked by the bathhouse a second time, she was finally able to light the fire.

Twenty-year-old illiterate and childless Fedosia Matfeeva Iudina: In early November of last year—1843—she, Fedosia, happened to ride by the house of the soldier's wife Agafia Bazhukova when her horse froze and she could not get it to move with her pleas. Finally, Kiril Bazhukov happened to walk by and took the horse by the reins and was able to get it past the house. Since that time, she has suffered from a headache. She told her relatives about it, and she suspects Bazhukova of making her ill because a rumor among the inhabitants of the settlement has it that the solder's wife Bazhukova and her daughter Anna bewitch people and animals. She doesn't know what Kiril Bazhukov died of, but the rumor suggests that Bazhukova's daughter bewitched him.

The literate, married but childless, twenty-three-year-old Efim Stepanov Bazhukov testified: When the soldier's wife Bazhukova was building her home, he and some people were nearby when Bazhukova quarreled with the neighboring Pystins, who were trying to prevent her from setting up a home here. She nonetheless obstinately built it. They hurled every type of insult against each other and the Pystins accused Bazhukova of being a witch and heretic.

Forty-two-year-old Pavel Efremov Iudin is illiterate, married, and has children: He knows for a fact that the soldier's wife Agafia Bazhukova and her daughter Anna don't live in harmony with their neighbors. A rumor has been circulating for a long time that they supposedly bewitch people and animals; a similar rumor had circulated about Agafia's now-deceased parents, but he doesn't know the means by which they do this …

The literate Pavel Grigorev Kazakov, age twenty-one, remarried with children, testified: His first wife Daria told him that when she was at the mill with the girl Anna and Anna was looking for lice in Daria's hair, she, Daria, suddenly felt such an unbearable pain that her eyes became twisted. She suffered three weeks and died suddenly after Epiphany. This is why he suspects Anna of bewitching his wife.

5.8 NO PLACE IS SAFE FROM THIS WITCH: THE CASE AGAINST AGAFIA POLIKARPOVA (1848–49)

Source: GAVO, f. 175, op. 2, d. 69, ll. 6, 30 ob.–34 ob., 35, 35 ob., 36–36 ob., 37 ob.

The following case of multiple bewitchments came under the purview of the Vologda court of equity after having been investigated at the local land court level in the second half of 1848. The investigation was initiated in response to an estate steward's complaint against the serf woman Agafia Polikarpova for bewitching some of his family members and other serfs on the estate. A complaint by the steward would have carried a great deal of weight with all concerned. That official, though likely to be a serf himself because of his being illiterate, carried out his owner's orders, ranging from assigning labor tasks to collecting rents in kind and cash to punishing serfs for insubordination. A steward's desire to exile a serf from an estate held particular sway with a landowner and community alike. Note that the steward's allegations against Polikarpova refer to offenses that supposedly took place over many years. One of the reported bewitchments purportedly occurred seven years prior to his making this formal complaint. This delay matches a common pattern in accusations against witches in many cultures: suspicions accumulate over time, with harbored resentments mounting and additional confirmation collecting. Such suspicions might never reach the point of formal expression or might ultimately provoke recourse to lawsuits or extralegal measures.

As in other cases, the alleged witch is accused of using physical objects to spread some of her malevolence. It would appear that Agafia Polikarpova was known for her hospitality because several people readily accepted her invitations to eat at her home and she was invited to prepare food for a wedding. The latter was no small task as weddings were celebrated over several days and the dishes were both elaborate and plentiful. But, of course, food preparation can be fraught with dangers. Peasants certainly understood that food could go bad through natural means, but if spectacular, serious, or sudden illness struck an otherwise healthy person after a meal, or if a host had the misfortune of having multiple guests fall ill, the community might grow suspicious. Misgivings strengthened when others confirmed similar feelings. Some of the victims started to feel certain pains only after they had heard other people's descriptions of their symptoms. And all presumably shared cultural expectations that bewitchment was likely to occur at weddings. As in several other cases in our collection, Agafia's being a single woman and having illegitimate children came back to haunt her both in terms of people's attitudes toward her and the Orthodox strictures against premarital sex.

Steward's report to the Kadnikovsk land court

August 21, 1848: According to the report to the Kadnikovsk land court in Kadnikovsk District, … by the steward Andrei Agafonov of the village Patreshevo, which belongs to the estate of the nobleman Aleksandr Mikhailovch Kormilitsin, the unmarried peasant woman Agafia Polikarpova was accused not only by the estate's communal people of our estate's village of Panovska, but also by others of bewitching many estate people as well as strangers. We are holding her at the estate so that she does not do more harm and are clearly reporting this. We ask the court that she be treated accordingly.

The serf Aleksei Matveev signed this petition on behalf of the illiterate steward Andrei Agafonov and the communal people.

Testimonies before the land court

1. [The steward] Andrei Agafonov Kalinichev testified that his daughter Avdotia Andreeva, who lives with him, was the first to be bewitched. The resulting illness expressed itself initially by way of a severe headache, a constricted heart, the shaking of her body, and the throbbing of her limbs. In the end she barked like a dog. In December 1841 before St. Nicholas's Day (*December 6*), he found a plait of women's hair approximately an *arshin* long in the bathhouse. Later on Whit Monday, after Avdotia accepted Agafia Polikarpova's invitation and ate something at her home, her pain got a lot worse. Kalinichev's niece, Natalia Ivanova, who lives with him, was the second victim. She felt the bewitchment in 1848 on Saturday on the eve of St. Peter's fast at a neighbor's barn when she was threading a loom and Polikarpova walked by and threw a small bundle containing some wax, hair, and other items under her legs. The third set of victims—his daughter Akilina Andreeva and nieces Pelageia Gavrilova and Milodora Ivanova—felt they were bewitched on the very last day before the start of St. Peter's fast in 1848, when Polikarpova had invited them to her home and they ate (*pre-lenten*) meat pies there. There are others besides his family members in the volost who are suffering from bewitchment. He doesn't suspect any of the above-mentioned people other than the girl Agafia Polikarpova because of her previous debauched behavior and even more so because during their fits the individuals suffering from the bewitchment point to her and identify the time and place of their bewitchment. He doesn't want Polikarpova to remain on the estate. Prior to this time no one in Kornevsk Volost suffered from this ailment.

2. Avdotia Andreeva, Akilina Andreeva, Natalia Ivanova, Palageia Gavrilova, and Milodora Ivanova upheld Andrei Kalinichev's denunciation.

3. Elizaveta Efimova Gorimova explained that she felt herself to be bewitched repeatedly and on a daily basis. She knew she was bewitched because she started experiencing severe headaches and heart constrictions, and then her whole body began to tremble a week after Whitsunday in 1848,

after Agafia Polikarpova had embraced (*obkhvatila*) her stomach. It couldn't have been anyone other than Polikarpova who had placed this coincidental illness on her.

4. Avdotia Grigoreva Fedorova said that on Easter Sunday 1848, she felt herself to be bewitched when she had accepted Polikarpova's invitation to come to her home and she ate meat pies and drank kvass there. Within twenty-four hours, she became seriously ill, but after she had carried out her vow to venerate God's saints, her illness had lessened somewhat and at the present time it is only bad once every twenty-four hours. Beyond this, she upheld what the above persons said.

5. Olga Alekseeva upheld Avdotia Fedorova's testimony.

6. Maremiana Vasileva upheld Andrei Kalinichev's testimony.

7. Akilina Andreeva said that she felt herself to have been bewitched in 1848 during her wedding. It initially revealed itself as a strong melancholia, but it later intensified and revealed other symptoms, which are described in the testimonies above, when she saw her other neighbors suffering from the same bewitchment.

8. Maria Aleksandrova said that she felt herself bewitched during her daughter's wedding, when Polikarpova had been invited to the wedding to prepare the food. Beyond this, she upheld what the persons above said.

9. Nikolai Andreev and Vasilii Andreev testified to exactly what their mother Maria Aleksandrova testified.

10. Anna Evseeva said that she initially felt herself to be bewitched before Butter Week when she experienced severe chest pains, but the second time round she had the symptoms described in the testimonies above.

11. Maremiana Andreeva said that she felt that she had been bewitched on the third day of St. Peter's fast of 1848, when she came to the village Petrashevo to inquire about her mother Marina Iakovleva's health. She found some animal fur there, which she had given to the girl Agafia Polikarpova for combing. She also visited Agafia Polikarpova's house and ate some fish soup there. Otherwise, she upheld what the persons above had testified.

12. Agafia Polikarpova said that she never bewitched anyone on the estate run by the steward Andrei Agafonov or any other people living in Kornevsk and Bogorodsk Volosts. In earlier years she gave birth to illegitimate children, in 1838 to her daughter Vereniia and in 1846 to her son Fedor, but they were now deceased. She doesn't remember with whom she had the children and upheld her testimony even under a cleric's exhortation.

13. Kirian Vasilev Sharkynov and twenty-four other men testified under oath that suspicions based on widespread rumors fell on Polikarpova for bewitching Andrei Kalinichev's family and

other individuals. They were not in favor of having Polikarpova reside in their volost for fear that the bewitchment would spread. Earlier, people had not suffered from this illness in Kornevsk Volost.

Initial conclusions

The general investigation of the suspect Polikarpova with regard to her history of having had illegitimate children and the rumors concerning her bewitchment of people found her behavior wanting.

She was not recorded in the metric books, but according to the previous eighth national revision (*census*) she was listed as being twenty-four years old.

(Polikarpova was judged according to the 1842 Penal Code, vol. 15, articles 1169, 1175, 1176 [see the first of the documents in 3.20], as well as 1289 for cohabitation outside of marriage, which required a church penance "if the defendants were Christian.")

Verdict of the Vologda court of equity, October 28, 1849

In the investigation of peasant women, girls and boys, a total of fifteen persons testified that their former illnesses, such as severe headaches, a constricted heart, and body tremors, occurred in some instances after they had been in Agafia's home at her invitation, while in other cases they occurred after the wedding of the girl Akilina Andreeva, during which Agafia had prepared food. Finally, in the case of one peasant woman, namely Elizaveta Efimova, she had experienced that kind of illness after Agafia had embraced her stomach.

The woman's braid found in the steward Andrei Agafonov's bathhouse and the bundle of wax with hair found in her neighbor's loft, which Agafia supposedly threw up there, could do little to incriminate her as the perpetrator of such a serious crime, and whether Agafia actually threw those items could not be proven. As for the illnesses, they could have occurred from people being chilled or from their eating excessive amounts of food, which affected their stomachs. On the basis of articles 1169, 1175, and 1176 of the 1842 Penal Code, the court felt that there was insufficient evidence to punish her but ordered that the Vologda Consistory be informed of Agafia's

having committed fornication, for which she was to be given a penance which would be decided by a spiritual authority, citing article 1289 of the Penal Code.

(The court also cited articles 1350 and 1601 of the same law code in noting that the acquitted defendant Agafia Polikarpova was to be informed by the Kadnikovsk district court [where she was presumably being held] about the court of equity's decision and that she was to sign a document addressed to the court expressing either her satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the decision.

The final version of the verdict was dated November 15, 1849.)

Chapter 6

SEX/LOVE/ANTI-LOVE MAGIC

The term "love magic" conjures up a romantic picture of hearts and roses and lovely charms geared to draw star-crossed lovers together. There are some Russian examples of this kind of gentle love magic. For instance, a healer named Nesterko, who practiced in the Shatsk District in southern Russia in 1673, explained that he aided couples to achieve loving relationships. He would provide the "person of the female sex" a cup of river water over which he would recite a prayer or spell:

> Have mercy, Most Blessed Mother of God. Intercede for us sinners. Be merciful. Cover the sinful souls of your male slave So-and-so and your female slave So-and-so with your incorruptible mantle. In the whole world, protect them. Give them, Mother of God, love between them and [allow them] to live in harmony as of old, in love, so that they now and forever will live in harmony together. And when they comb their hair with that river water three times in the night, so may the woman So-and-so keep combing her husband, your slave, So-and-so, day and night and in the hours when the river flows. Eternal glory to you, and to those aforenamed people, husband and wife, eternal life.

Nesterko encouraged tender physical contact, and explicitly prayed for loving relationships as part of his cure for men who could not have intercourse with their wives.[1]

Nesterko's gentle magic seems quite unusual however. In the annals of Russian magic, interference in the mysterious workings of attraction more commonly took on far darker and more sinister tones. Passion and attraction had little role in the way spousal relationships were imagined and were greeted with even less sympathy outside of marriage. Any use of "love magic" threatened to upend the carefully crafted social order. When used to seduce a married woman into adultery or an unmarried girl into fornication, spells clearly violated the bonds of holy matrimony and of sanctified sexual unions, and such magic was understood as coercive, even abusive. The historian Elena B. Smilianskaia describes a case where a married woman found herself subject to an uncontrollable attraction to a man who was not her husband. After a protracted and passionate affair, she testified to being bewildered at what could have driven her to such obsession. Eventually she resolved the puzzle when she realized that bewitchment offered the only possible explanation. Her lover must, undoubtedly, have cast a spell on her to force her into such a fever pitch of fervid desire. In a culture that conceded little to the interior forces of psychology, external coercive forces neatly explained the dynamics of, and shifted the blame for, illicit passion. The text of that trial is presented in Chapter 9 (see Document 9.3) rather than in this one because of the "satanic" nature of the love charm.[2]

Even within marriages, when an unhappy wife turned to charms to calm her husband's violent temper and to "make him love me"—that is, to stop beating her and abusing her—her efforts were viewed as subverting the proper patriarchal hierarchy. Her incantations, if effective, might undermine the husband's ability to decide for himself how to treat her, to coerce him into treating her "lovingly," when he would prefer to mete out violence instead. Interestingly, similar "love spells" were addressed to authorities, in hopes of making them love the spellcaster and treat him or her kindly.

In the sampling of cases that follow, sex rather than love seems to be the primary issue, although the particular cruelty of the "spells for women" shows that emotional as well as physical subjugation was often the goal of

magical incantation. Like most spells, the formulas used in love spells were generic, useful for any occasion, with fill-in-the-blank slots for the name of "female slave of God So-and-so" and "male slave of God So-and-so."

6.1 A CASE OF PEASANT WOMEN'S LOVE MAGIC AND VENGEANCE, SHATSK (1647)

Source: RGADA f. 210, Belgorodskii stol, stlb. 284, ll. 391–418; N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Koldovstvo v Moskovskoi Rusi XVII veka* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Al'tshulera, 1906), no. 11, 63–73.

The record of the trial of three peasants from the Shatsk region in the Russian South begins midstream and ends, as is so often the case, without final resolution. As is also typical, the lengthy case record includes a great deal of repetition, which we have attempted to minimize through strategic omissions. The accused witches as well as their purported victims and their accusers in this instance were all peasants, and the investigation opens up a world of village life far removed from politics or power on any grand scale. The original accusations arose within a peasant village that belonged to the boyar Prince Nikita Ivanovich Odoevskii. The peasant bailiff of the village initially heard the complaint before referring it up to the town governor, who then alerted the tsar and the appropriate authorities in the Military Chancellery.

The resentments that motivate these stories stem from the pressures of intimacy within family and village community, intimacy that spawned both love and hatred. Following the relationships in this case can be a little tricky, so we do our best here to outline them.

Agafitsa and Ovdotitsa were sisters, daughters of a man named Savva Kozhevnikov. Agafitsa, possibly unmarried, had an affair with the estate bailiff, a peasant named Fedor Severgin, whom she attempted to bind to her with a love charm. She testified that the magic failed, and he cheated on her with one woman and then rubbed salt in the wound by marrying another one. At that point, with her sister's help, she turned to darker magic, which killed him. Incidental victims along the way were her sister's brother-in-law, Stepka, a peasant official named Stepanka (also called Stepashka, Stepka, Stepan) Shakov, who attempted to get her to break off her affair with Severgin, and a scribe named Shishik, whose involvement is never explained. According to her own testimony, Ovdotitsa married a peasant man named Iakushka Fedorov, the stepson of another villager, Tereshka Ivelev. Iakushka abandoned his wife and went to join the free Cossacks, at which point Ovdotitsa fled from her village and disappeared, in time to avoid arrest. Tereshka

himself testifies to learning spells and magic from other men while he was working on boats and barges on the Volga in his youth. The movement of all of these peasants reveals a world of itinerants, far less bound to their lands and masters than we might anticipate in Muscovite society.

The testimonies recorded in this case provide precious details about the techniques and materials used by peasant sorcerers, and the words of the spells they recited. Their key terms are imprecise, and different scholars have offered different translations. The central mode of bewitchment discussed here involves charges that the women "tied *kily*" and "caused *nevstanikhi*." *Nevstanikhi*, literally, not-standing-up-ness, is a none-too-subtle reference to impotence. The term *kily* is more difficult to translate. It can refer to hernias or ruptures, and often healers pleaded guilty to treating hernias/*kily* in small children. Given the context here, however, it seems to refer to a different symptom with which it is often associated—that is, the swelling of the testicles.

In providing specific directions to the investigators, Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich (or one of his advisers who could speak in his name) expressed concern about the state of the defendants' souls as they faced execution. Before they were led to the public square for their demise, they were to be assigned a cleric, who would confess them in private and, on the basis of the evidence at hand, decide whether they should have access to the communion cup and thus be forgiven for their sins. That decision—unstated here—would be based on the advice that canon law provided clerics. A priest had the right to mitigate the severity of a death sentence by administering the Eucharist. The distinct roles of church and state are clear here, as is their cooperation in prosecuting the case.

Also evident in this text is the building frustration in Moscow over the apparent foot-dragging by local officials in Shatsk. Despite unequivocal instructions from the tsarist authorities, a sequence of provincial governors delayed the executions on the pretext of needing further directions from the center. The surviving documentation ends without any confirmation that the sentence was carried out.

Communiqué from Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich to the governor of Shatsk, Grigorii Khitrovo, demanding to know why no action has been taken in the ongoing case of accused witches Agafitsa and Tereshka

From Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia to our Shatsk governor Grigorii Semenovich Khitrovo. In November of this year, 1647, we wrote to Shatsk to Grigorii Shanskii and ordered him to interrogate the woman Agafitsa Savkina Kozhevnikova and the peasant man Tereshka Ivelev while they are in the torture chamber near the implements of torture and then to torture them harshly and burn them with fire, to discover the names of the people and sorts of people they bewitched and killed and the names of the people they afflicted with hernias/testicular swelling and impotence (*kily i*

nevstanikhi). And who, by name, worked this mischief with them against these men and women, and where and from whom by name did Tereshka Ivlev learn such witchcraft and evil (*vedovstvo i vsiakaia durna*), and where is Tereshka's daughter-in-law/Agafitsa's sister Ovdotitsa now? And if the woman Agafitsa and the peasant Tereshka don't add anything to their previous testimony in questioning and with torture and just repeat their previous testimony, then they should be burned in a cage stuffed with blocks of straw in the town square in the presence of many people, after you have declared to them their guilt and publicly announced their acts, which are offensive to God.

And on February 26, we wrote to see if, following our order, Grigorii Shanskii, after having given the woman Agafitsa and the peasant Tereshka a father-confessor (*i.e., the opportunity to confess their sins*) and having informed them of their guilt and publicly announced their sinful acts, had them burned in a cage, surrounded by straw, in the town square in the presence of many people.

But Grigorii Shanskii didn't do anything to carry out our order regarding the woman Agafitsa and the peasant Tereshka, and you, Grigorii (*Khitrovo, the new governor who had replaced Grigorii Shanskii*), say that you don't dare execute them without our order, and we should tell you what to do.

And when you get this order, you should take the woman Agafitsa and the peasant Tereshka, and after having assigned them a father-confessor, order them to be given communion with the holy divine gifts if they merit it, and after having given them communion, order them taken to the square and announce to them their guilt and proclaim their sinful acts publicly, in the presence of many people, and order them burned on the square in a cage surrounded by straw.

And report back to us.

And it was ordered that the woman Ovdotitsa, Tereshka Ivlev's daughter-in-law, be searched for, using all means necessary, so that she can be found in person. And if the woman Ovdotitsa is found, you should inform us and hold the woman in the great fortress under guard until our order reaches you. Written in Moscow 156 (1647) on September 11.

(*On the reverse side of the page:*) this decree was sent with Shatsk messenger Matiushka Ermakov on September 11.

Report from the governor of Shatsk, Grigorii Khitrovo, to Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich with updates on the case

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia, your slave Grishka Khitrovo petitions. In this 156 year (1647), on December 19, your order was sent under the seal of State Secretary Grigorii Larionov to the previous governor, Grigorii Shanskii, and by your decree he was ordered to question the peasant woman Agafitsa Savkina Kozhevnikova, a peasant belonging to your sovereign's boyar Prince Nikita Ivanovich Odoevskii, and Ishmalit Murza Isinev's peasant Tereshka Ivlev of his hamlet Lotkozino in Shatsk Province. The governor was ordered to interrogate them with torture for a second time and to burn them with fire in order to get them to name who and which people they bewitched and how many people they bewitched to death and to name people they afflicted with hernias and impotence by name and to confess how many people they afflicted, and to tell him who worked this evil with them, against these men and women. He should find out the names of the people from whom Tereshka Ivlev learned such evil and where Tereshka's daughter-in-law/Agafitsa's sister Ovdotitsa is now.

And following your order, the previous Shatsk governor, Grigorii Shanskii, first questioned them amid the torture implements and then ordered them tortured hard and burned with fire, and the previous governor left the records of their testimony in the governor's office. And the transcripts of those interrogation and torture testimonies are affixed below on this report, and I sent them to you, Sovereign, in Moscow and ordered them given to the Military Chancellery to your state secretaries Ivan Gavrenev and Mikhail Volosheninov and secretary Grigorii Larionov.

And the previous governor … was ordered to throw them into a cage stuffed with bales of straw, but he didn't carry it out, and I, your slave, don't dare execute them without your sovereign order. Tell me, your slave, what you, Sovereign, command.

The governor of Shatsk renews the investigation and sends the transcribed testimony to Moscow

In 156 (1648) on January 18, by the sovereign's order sent from the Military Chancellery under the seal of State Secretary Grigorii Larionov, Governor Grigorii Ivanovich Shanskii set the peasant woman Agafitsa amid the torture implements and interrogated her, and then interrogated her again with torture. Both times, with and without torture, she repeated her previous testimony. She confessed that she made men's testicles swell and made them impotent. And she said: "I, Agafitsa, with my sister Ovdotitsa bewitched and killed (*isportala i umorila do smerti*) the boyar Prince Nikita Ivanovich Odoevskii's bailiff (*prikaznyi chelovek*), Fedka Severgin."

[She also confessed that] she killed the peasant Stepanka Shakov and bewitched the scribe Shishik, and she made her sister Ovdotitsa's brother-in-law Stepanka's testicles swell. And her sister Ovdotitsa and her sister Ovdotitsa's father-in-law, Tereshka Ivlev, taught her all that evil, and other than that, she said: "I didn't bewitch anyone and didn't teach anyone that evil, and no one other than my sister worked such evil."

Under torture she said that "her sister Ovdotitsa ran away from the village of Sotnitsyno with Mishka Kozhanko, Elisei Protasev Lochanov's man, to Kazan, and to whom they fled and with whom they now live, that I don't know."

That same day Governor Shanskii, placing before him Ishmamet Murza Isinev's peasant of the hamlet of Lotkozino, Tereshka Ivlev, questioned him amid the torture implements and then ordered him tortured hard and burned mercilessly with fire. And Tereshka Ivlev in questioning and with torture repeated the same things he had said before. And he said:

> I taught this evil to only one woman, Agafitsa, and I didn't teach any such evil to anyone else, male or female. And I didn't bewitch anyone myself, and I didn't make anyone's testicles swell or cause impotence in anyone, and I didn't kill anyone. And I don't know about my daughter-in-law Ovdotitsa: I don't know where she ran off to or with whom, because she wasn't living with me; she was living in the village of Sotnitsyno, which belongs to the boyar Prince Nikita Ivanovich Odoevskii. And I learned that evil on the Volga on the boats. I heard about it from the barge haulers, but I don't remember whose boat on the Volga and in what year and under whom in particular I was serving at the time, because it was long ago when I was young.

In 155 (1647) on August 28, by decree of the sovereign, the boyar Prince Nikita Ivanovich Odoevskii's bailiff Fedor Poroshin together with the peasant elder and with selected trusted peasants applied various tortures to the peasant woman Agashka about the previous denunciation by Sava Tomakhin's wife Ovdoshka Kharlamova, that she, Agashka, had threateningly recited a spell to make men's testicles swell:

> On the Ocean Sea, on the Isle of Buian, stands a sturdy oak. On the oak sits a black crow. In its mouth it holds a bladder (*an organ from an animal such as an ox that could be used as a container*). The crow flies from the oak to the sea, and it says: you, bladder, fill yourself up with water; and you, testicles swell up. And the key to that verse is this: as that bird drinks water and swells up, so may those testicles swell on all days and at all hours as a result of her spell.

And Agashka said she slept with Fedor Severgin during the Great Fast (*Lent*), when her father, Savka Fedorov, invited Fedor over to his house to drink wine and eat fish. When she first spent the night with Fedor, she took his essence (*i.e., semen*), because she planned to give him sorrel soup with a spell cast over it so that he would love her and would pine for her. She gave him this enchanted swill twice. And later she afflicted him with impotence twice because he cheated on her with Safroshka Timofeev's wife, and she made him impotent using a hair from a dead person and a spell.

And Agashka's sister Ovdoshka cured him of that impotence: she poured enchanted water through the shackle of a lock and gave it to him to drink, and thus cured him.

Then, when Fedor married someone other than Agashka and left her, she, together with that same sister Ovdoshka, bewitched him to death. For the first bewitchment her sister Ovdoshka went at night to the churchyard and took dirt from a grave, and she gave that dirt to Fedor Severgin in a drink, and with the spell: "Like a dead person, so may Fedor not stand up, and may he perish forever. And as a dead body disappears, so may Fedor disappear forever." And so that Fedor would die, she gave him some mushrooms (*guby*) and enchanted roots, but what those roots are called and where they grow, and for what malevolent witchcraft they are used is impossible to describe.

And she, Agashka, also bewitched to death the peasant functionary Stepashka Shakov. She bewitched him with some mushrooms that grow on the dung heap and mixed the mushrooms with roots and small rags. She burned all of those things together with an old rag that she took from Fedor, and she gave Stepashka the mixture in a drink. Because of that bewitchment, Stepan, didn't even live a day [longer]. And she bewitched that Stepan because he forbade her to sleep with Fedor Severgin and to go to the boyar's house.

And she bewitched the scribe Shishik with the same magic she used on Fedor Severgin. And she made her sister Ovdoshka's brother-in-law Stepka's testicles swell with the same spell. And the peasant Tereshka Ivlev, who is her *svat* (*i.e., a distant in-law*) and her sister Ovdoshka's father-in-law, taught all of this evil to her. He lives in the village of Lotkozino and her sister Ovdoshka on the estate of Prince Nikita Ivanovich Odoevskii in Shatsk Province in the village of Sotnitsyno.

From Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich of All Russia to our governor in Shatsk, Grigorii Ivanovich Shanskii

Our boyar Prince Nikita Ivanovich Odoevskii told us that his bailiff, Fedor Poroshin, wrote to him from his Shatsk estate in the village of Sotnitsa that Sava Tomakhin's wife, the peasant woman Ovdotia Kharlamov, denounced the peasant woman Sava Kozhevnikov's daughter Agafitsa, accusing that Agafitsa of bewitching many people…. (*Here follows a summary of the charges already listed above. The following new information is abbreviated to avoid repetition.*)

And when this order from us reaches you, you should arrest [those peasants] and put Agafitsa and her sister Ovdotitsa and the peasant man Tereshka in direct, face-to-face confrontation with each other. And you should interrogate them and torture them hard [to get them to name their teachers and victims and students and anyone they worked with in this evil]. And if with questioning and with torture they begin to name other people, find them, confront them with each other directly, and question them

harshly. And if the case justifies torture, then you should torture them and burn them with fire.

And what the peasant Tereshka and the women Agafitsa and Ovdotitsa or any other people say in questioning and with torture, you are ordered to write it all down truthfully and you should send the report and the testimony taken during questioning and with torture to us. You should submit it to our state secretaries Ivan Gavrenev and Mikhail Volosheninov and Secretary Grigorii Larionov in the Military Chancellery. And the prisoners are to be held in Shatsk in prison and closely guarded.

Written in Moscow, October 8, 1647.

Petition to the tsar from Governor Shanskii saying he tortured the suspects as ordered and is attaching reports of testimony taken under torture below

(Governor Shanskii repeats the tsar's order of October 19, 1647, presumably when the order of October 8 reached him in Shatsk. His recap is omitted here to avoid repetition. We also have abbreviated all of the lengthy names, kinship descriptions, and village affiliations of the parties involved, who are already familiar from the text above.)

And, following your order, the bailiff, Fedor Poroshin, brought to me, your slave, in the governor's office in Shatsk, the peasant women Ovdotitsa and Agafitsa. About Ovdotitsa, the bailiff Fedor Poroshin said that she ran away from the village before he took over as bailiff, while the previous bailiff, Fedor Severgin, was in office. And I sent an artillery soldier (*pushkar'*) named Evtiushka Semenov from the governor's office, together with some of his fellow artillerymen, to the village of Lotkozino to arrest Tereshka Ivlev, and they went to the village and brought Tereshka back to me in the governor's office. I set that woman Agafitsa and that man Tereshka Ivlev in direct confrontation with each other and interrogated them about all kinds of bewitchment and tortured them. And the transcripts of what they said in questioning and with torture, I am attaching below and am sending to you, Sovereign, in Moscow. And I have instructed [the messenger] to submit this report and the testimony taken during

interrogation and questioning to the Military Chancellery, to your sovereign's state secretaries…. And I, your slave, have ordered Agafitsa and Tereshka Ivlev held in prison and closely guarded until your sovereign order arrives.

(*On the reverse side of the page*:) The boyars decreed that he should torture them again, and if they persist in repeating their previous testimonies and they add nothing new, he should assign them a priest. Once they have taken communion with God's holy secrets, he should have them burned.

Governor Shanskii's report on the investigation, October 25, 1647

(This is another repetitive report about testimony taken with and without torture. Little new information emerges except:)

- (*Agafitsa notes that although she bewitched the village scribe Shishik*,) "that scribe is still alive."
- (*Tereshka repeats his testimony but adds*:) "My daughter-in-law Ovdotitsa is the wife of my stepson Iakushka Fedorov, and she ran away from the estate of the boyar Prince Nikita Ivanovich Odoevskii from the village of Sotnitsyno in the year 155 (1646/47), before Fedor Poroshin came, while the previous bailiff, Fedor Severgin, was serving as bailiff, and he doesn't know where she fled; but his stepson Iakushko left the village of Sotnitsyno and went to the free Cossacks on the Don in 154 (1645/46).

A final order from the tsar

(The case ends with a last order from the tsar, responding to Governor Shanskii's report of November 19, 1647. Dated November 1647, but with the day left blank, the report reiterates the tsar's previous commands: to question and torture all involved parties, to execute Agafitsa and Tereshka by fire once their guilt is fully explored and they have made their last confessions, and to continue to search for the runaway Ovdotitsa. Once she

is found, she should be held in prison and closely guarded until the tsar sends his instructions about what further should be done.)

6.2 BEWITCHMENT AT WEDDINGS (1648)

Source: RGADA f. 210, Belgorodskii stol, stlb. 284, ll. 351–70, Novombergskii, *Koldovstvo v Moskovskoi Rusi*, no. 10, 53–63.

In 1648, a complaint from a common soldier, a dragoon of the Komaritsk District in the fortified borderlands in the South, set off a large-scale investigation to determine the validity of his charges of malevolent witchcraft against a local couple, a church sexton and his wife. The accused and their alleged victims were all of modest social standing, as were the dozens of witnesses, male and female, who ranged in rank from dragoons (*draguny*) and gunners or artillerymen (*pushkari*) to village priests, sextons, scribes, and peasants. Despite the humble status of the litigants and the everyday nature of the charges, the tsar's administration took the investigation seriously, as is evident in the extensive, though incomplete, record of the case.

This is a source rich in information on the practices of witchcraft. Witnesses repeated several curses that the dreaded Daritsa and her husband, the sexton Nekraska, uttered, so we can see the words they employed in their threats. The historian Jane Kamensky, a specialist on colonial New England, writes that witches' "curses were the verbal equivalent of blank checks for bad news," checks that could be called in at any time and for any amount. "In time," Kamensky writes, "such mundane forecasts became self-fulfilling prophesies…. The harsh realities of premodern life conspired to realize the witch's promise, making her the author of the future."[3] When Daritsa or Nekraska shouted or muttered, "You will have cause to remember me," their targets would live under the curse's shadow until the vague, unstated retribution fell on them. It is notable in this case that in the eyes of their community, the witches' words seem to have carried operative force alone, without the involvement of any talismans, roots and grasses, or ritual performances.

Reading through the testimony, it seems that Daritsa and Nekraska were bad-tempered and quick to anger, and their curses set their neighbors on edge. Nekraska described his wife as a powerful *znatnitsa,* or wisewoman. Whether she practiced sorcery as a craft or simply let words fly in anger is unclear from the case record. The anxieties in the testimony surround a consistent set of issues: along with general matters of illness and health, the witnesses express a sense of vulnerability to magical malfeasance at weddings, around maintenance of male sexual potency, and continuation of lineages,

here seen as a matter of concern for peasants and soldiers as much as for tsars and noble elites.

Also noteworthy in this case is the way that the accused wisewoman stands up for herself in court by protesting against violations of due process guaranteed by Muscovite law. She describes corrupt abuse of the required "general investigation," which nominally should have solicited testimony from everyone in the area. Instead, she claims, the governor conducted a partisan investigation by questioning only allies of her accusers and excluding the voices of her supporters.[4]

Accusation against the wife of the church sexton of the village of Morevo of witchcraft and bewitchment of people at weddings, 1648

In the year 1648 on January 15, Fedka Filippov, a dragoon of the Komaritsk District from the village of Morevo, petitioned Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich and also petitioned the attendant of the royal table (*stol'nik*) and Governor Zamiatnia Fedorovich Leontev and (*Assistant Governor*) Ivan Semenovich Kabylskii in the governor's office. He petitioned against Daritsa, Ivan's daughter, the wife of Nekraska, the church sexton of that same village. And in the petition it is written:

> To the sovereign: your slave, Fedka Filippov, dragoon of Komaritsk District, Radogoshsk Region (*stan*), village of Morevo, petitions. I have a complaint against the wife of Nekraska, the church sexton of that same village, Daria Ivanova. In the past year 147 (1638/39), Daria bewitched me and made me impotent (*uchinila skoptsom*). And she goes around to feasts and social gatherings and boasts that she did it deliberately. And I am completely ruined by that bewitchment and am not intimate with my wife now. Merciful Sovereign, favor me, your slave! Order your tsarist judicial justice be given to me in this my debility and bewitchment (*v moem uvech'e i porche*), whatever you, Sovereign, order. Tsar, Sovereign, have mercy.

(*On the reverse side of the page*:) On January 15, 1648, in response to this complaint a trial was held before Governor Zamiatii Fedorovich Leontev and Ivan Semenovich Kabylskii. That same day, the defendant Daritsa Ivanova appeared before the governor. Having heard the plaintiff's accusations, she said in response: she didn't bewitch Fedka, and she didn't go around to feasts and social gatherings and boast about witchcraft. Furthermore, she stated that the plaintiff Fedka Filippov relied for support of his claims on the dragoons and all ranks of people from the outlying

hamlets affiliated with the village of Morevo—that is, from the hamlets of Solomina, Gorbunova, Kuzminki, and the entire Dmitrievsk parish—and he called for a general questioning of the dragoons and all ranks of people, great and small, to confirm that she made threats and that they heard a lot [of threats and boasts] from her. But he excluded her friends. And the defendant Daritsa called in turn on the testimony of the dragoons and all ranks of people, with the exception of Fedka's friends and co-conspirators, to confirm that she didn't bewitch him, and didn't boast that she would do so. The plaintiff named people who should be brought in to testify: [three men] from the same village of Morevo, and the sexton of the church—but he's forgotten its name. The defendant also listed people from their village of Morevo to be brought in to testify: Grishka Biriuk, Firsik Timofeev, Grishka Orfimenov, Fedka Makarev, and the communal woodcutter (*gubnyi sechnik*), Kirilka Miagkov, who was rebuffed by our priest (*tot de popom nashim greboval*) and had to get married in another parish.

Plaintiff Fedka said: Kirilka got married in another parish because he feared the bewitchment caused by her, Daritsa.

The governor ordered that the plaintiff and defendant be released on surety until the tsar's order arrived, but the defendant couldn't assemble a group of sureties [to sign as guarantors of her good behavior], so he ordered that Daritsa be placed under guard by members of the artillery. And the plaintiff Fedka Filipov collected sureties for himself and in the surety it is written:

> I, Musketeer Vasilii Moskalev, and I, Nikon Ivanov Salabaev, dragoon of the Komaritsk District …, signed in the presence of the guard Fedor Shchukin, musketeer from Sevsk, to certify that Fedka Filipov, dragoon of that same village of Morevo, initiated [a complaint] on January 11 of this year, 1648, against Daria Ivanova concerning injury done to him. And by our signature we give assurance that he will appear in court in Sevsk before Governor Zamiatii Fedorovich Leontev and Ivan Semenovich Kabylskii for trial and will not leave Sevsk Province or run away until the resolution of the case…. And if, in violation of our signed guarantee, he fails to appear before the governor in court in Sevsk for trial or leaves Sevsk and runs away before the completion of the trial, then the sovereign should collect a fine from us, whatever sum he declares. And Kuzma Semenov stands as witness to this guarantee and to our acceptance of taking the risk of incurring the fine.

Ivashka Merkulov wrote this surety document on January 16, 1648.

(On the reverse side of the page:)

The town square clerk Senka Kirillov signed his hand to this surety in place of the guarantors Vasilii Moskalev and Nikon Ivanov, at their request.

On January 26, 1648, by tsar's order … a man from Starodub, Grigorii Ferapontev Novosiltsov, went to the village of Morevo and to the hamlets of Solomina and Gorbunova and Kuzminska to conduct an investigation. He questioned the widowed priest Danilo of the St. Dmitrii Church of the village of Morevo, making him swear to tell the truth by the honor of his priestly vows. He also questioned the dragoons and all residents of the village of Morevo and the entire Dmitrovsk parish firmly, holding them to their cross-kissed oath of loyalty to the sovereign, and he questioned all of their wives and children in truth, without exception, except for those people who had been dismissed from the questioning about this matter.

(*He asked them:*) In the past 1638/39 year, did Daritsa, the church sexton Nekraska's wife, bewitch Fedka Filipov and afflict him with impotence? And having bewitched him, did she boast about that bewitchment at feasts and social gatherings? And did she bewitch anyone else?

And in the investigation the widowed priest Danilo swore by the authority vested in him as a priest and testified: In the past, in the year 1639/40, someone stole a dress from Daritsa, Nekraska's wife, and she discerned what had happened to the stolen object [by following] the path cut by her sickle. Having found out about the theft, she started to suspect a peasant of that same village, Evtifei Ivanov. And at that time, in his, Priest Danilo's, presence, she threatened that she would curse Evtifei, saying: "I will make him as black as the ceiling of a hut is black, and he will bend like a sickle bends."

And after Daritsa's threat, Evtiushka rapidly fell sick, and for three years he withered and, having withered, died. And (*later*), Daritsa's stolen property showed up, and it wasn't Evtiushka's fault.

And the priest Danilo also described an incident when Fedka Filipov got married in the past 1638/39 year. When Fedka was returning home from the wedding, and he was going with his bride up the staircase to the bedchamber, Daritsa lit a sliver of wood and she threw it under the staircase below the feet of Fedka and his bride. And then she hitched up her skirt and peed on the burning sliver. And he heard about this incident from a resident of that village and from the women who were at the wedding. Signed.

Two dragoons of that same village of Morevo, Khariton Kireev and Mikhaila Antonov, swore by their cross-kissed oath to the sovereign: In 1638/39 (7147), when Fedka Filipov got married and when he was riding back with the entourage from the wedding, they were right across from his house on the hillock, and Nekraska's wife, Daritsa, met them and started to threaten Fedka and his father, Filip, in a room of the house. She said: "You will have cause to remember me!" and after that that Fedka became bewitched and afflicted with impotence. But whether the bewitchment and impotence were caused by Daritsa or not, that we don't know for sure.

Svirid Sviridov Mokhonov said: In 1638/39, Daritsa came to his house for a visit after his son-in-law's wedding, and she started to bark at his son-in-law Fedka with all sorts of bad words and mortal oaths.

Ivan Ignatev and Semen Garasimov said: "We don't know whether Nekraska's wife bewitched Fedka Filipov or not. That we don't know. We only heard from people of that village that Daritsa threatened him." Also, in the past 155 (1646/47) year, Semen Sheia of that same village told Semen Garasimov that Nekraska's wife, Daritsa, found him (*Semen Sheia*) asleep on the street, hitched up her skirt, and covered his eyes with it.

Avdei Petrov said: "I heard a complaint from Lukian Fedotov of that same village and from Andriushka Kireev against Daritsa that she threatened them with all sorts of evil acts."

Avdei Antonov said about five years ago Fedka's uncle Filipp Kondratev complained that Daritsa had bewitched his nephew Fedka.

Ivan Kondratev said he heard from villagers that Daritsa bewitched Fedka, but he himself doesn't know for sure.

Fedor Ansiforov said: In the year 1646 before St. Philip's fast at a feast at Ivan Tolokennik's house, Daritsa's husband, Nekraska Trofimov, threatened Fedka's father-in-law, Svirido Sviridov, saying, "Your son-in-law Fedka will never sleep with his wife, and you won't sleep with your wife either!" And he himself heard these threatening words from Nekraska.

Mikhaila Stepanov said: In this year 1647/48 during the Great Miasoed (meat fare),[5] he heard from a man of that same village, Fedor Aksinforov, that Nekraska boasted about his wife: "There is no other wisewoman (*znatnitsa*) who knows what Nekraska's Daritsa knows!" And Fedor Ansiforov said: In the past, in 1646 during Holy Week, the sexton spent the night at Fedka's, and waking up in the night, he asked whose house was he sleeping at. Fedka told him: at his, Fedka's, house. And at that time, Nekraska said to him that there is no other wisewoman like his wife, Daritsa. She can just spit at a dog, and the dog will fall silent and won't bark at all.

Timofei Sanelev said in 1646 during Holy Week at a feast at Grishka Semenov's house, he heard [curses] from Nekraska's wife, Daritsa, herself. In his presence she threatened Lukian Fedotov: "I will devour you, Lukian, just like I did Fedka Filipov."

Ivan Tolokonnik said in 1647 during Holy Week, Daritsa made threats at his gate: "That Fedka writhes because of me, and Lukian Fedotov's son will writhe because of me too."

Agapon Averkiev said in 1646/47, he heard from Grishka Biriuk's wife, Tatiana, that Daritsa bewitched her. (*This is an interesting tidbit, since Biriuk was one of the people Daritsa listed as a supporter of her side of the story.*) He himself also heard Daritsa say in that year during Holy Week, in the courtyard of her house: "I will curse you so hard, Gapon, that you won't be able to crawl across your threshold."

Semen Sidorov, Lukian Borisov, Matvei Ivanov, Grigorii Kharitonov, Danilo Stepanov, Semen Terekhov, and Boris Semenov said: We heard from our brothers, from the villagers, that Daritsa bewitched Fedka Filipov.

Perfil Andreev, Martyn Larin, Mark Evtieev, and Anisim Kharitonov said: This year during the period between Christmas and Shrovetide, at a feast at

the home of the widow Daria Anofrieva, Daritsa's husband, Nekraska, got in a fight with the widowed priest Danilo, and Nekraska said to the priest Danilo: "I will devour you somehow."

Terekh Vasilev, Markar Ivanov, and Vasilii Fedorov said: In 1646 around Holy Week,[6] Lukian Fedotov accused that Daritsa of bewitchment, that she wanted to bewitch him.

Stepan Grigorev said in 1640/41, he was at a wedding at Averian Petrov's house and Daritsa's husband, Nekraska, threatened him, Stepanka, saying: "You will go to your house and you won't recognize your own wife and children."

Semen Borisov said in the past year 1647 during Holy Week, he went for some brew to the hamlet of Solomina and having drunk up, he passed out on the street, and Nekraska's wife, Daritsa, came up to him and hitched up her skirt and covered his eyes with the hem of the skirt. And since that time, his eyes hurt, and his testicles started to swell.

The widow Maria Andreeva of the village of Morevo said: In the past year 1647, she heard a denunciation from Semen Borisov, who spoke to her against Daritsa. He told her that when he was in the hamlet of Solomina he fell asleep on the street, and she, Daritsa, came up to him and covered him with the hem of her skirt.

A dragoon's wife of that same village—Fedor Aksiforov's wife, Avdotia Ivanova—said: In the past year 1638/39, when Fedka Filipov got married, she was at that wedding. And when the procession was going up the stairs [into Fedka's house], Daritsa and her friend Maria, the sexton's wife, jumped up from the hut, lit a sliver of wood on fire, and pressed the sliver in Fedka's and his bride's footsteps. And Nekraska's wife, Daritsa, was standing at that time at the gate [to the compound], in the doorway.

Matvei Ivanov's wife, Maria Ivan's daughter, said: In 1645/46 before St. Dmitrii's Day, that Daritsa came to a feast at her house, and when she went out of the hut and upstairs, in the courtyard in front of her Daritsa threatened Kirei's son Andrei: "You will also be impotent, like Fedka Filipov is impotent." And Daritsa's husband, Nekraska, said at that same time:

"May the same thing that happened to Fedka Filipov happen to Kirei's son Andrei."

Lukian Borisov's wife, Fekla Larionova, said: In 1639 during Holy Week, she was with Daritsa at a gathering at the home of Grigorii Semenov of that same village. And Daritsa threatened Lukian Fedotov, and Lukian was there too, [and she said:] "May you be impotent, Lukian, by my power, just like Fedka Filipov is impotent thanks to me."

Fedor Avdeev's wife, Maria Fursova, said: In 1647 after St. Peter's Day, while chasing the livestock from the field, Daritsa threatened her brothers Melentei and Afanasii Fursov, and threatening them, she said: "I will turn them upside down by their noses and they will be scattered to the four corners." And that night, following on these words, Maria's brothers lay down and, after a while, died.

(*Maria Fursova continued*:) And this year before Holy Week on Friday, Nekraska's daughter, the girl Avdotitsa, was on the street when she and some others went to get water, and at that time that girl said in their hearing: "Like my mother will be destroyed by Fedka's denunciation, so may they not resurrect Fedka."

Averkii Petrov's wife, Nastasia Kuzmina; Stepan Grigorev's wife, Domna Grigoreva; Ivan Kondratev's wife, Martyn's daughter; and Khariton Frolov's wife, Daria Frolova, said: "In the past year 1646/47, we heard a complaint against that Daritsa from Iakov, and from Lukian Fedotov, and from Andrei Kireev, about her threats."

An old beggar of the village of Morevo, Karpo Martynov, said in the past year 1645/46, that the priest Iakov argued with Daritsa's husband Nekraska, and Nekraska threatened the priest with the curse: "Somehow I will devour you." After those threats, Priest Iakov's body became covered in sores for half a year, and with these abscesses he died.

And that same beggar said: "I heard in the past year 1646/47, that Daritsa threatened Frusov's son Menentii in the street, after an argument with him. She said: 'And I will dismember you and scatter you to the four corners!' Melentii became sick and lay in bed for a while, but I don't know whether he died."

A dragoon from the hamlet of Gorbunova, Artem Fedorov, said: "In the past 1638/39, when Fedka and his bride came from their wedding, they climbed out of the sleigh and were going to their bedchamber, when Daritsa placed fire in their footprints. When people saw that, they started to tell Daritsa that she was not doing a good thing, and Daritsa said that she was just joking. Dragoon Mogilin and Aleksei Pyzin were also at the wedding, and they can testify about it."

Aleksei Pyzin said in questioning: In 1638/39, Fedka Filipov got married in Morevo, and when he took his bride and went to get married, he, Aleshka, was hanging out with the groom's father, Filipp Kondratev, and the church sexton Nekraska was also there with them. He, Aleshka, said to Nekraska that he should go with the priest to help at Fedka's wedding, and Daritsa was sitting there with them, and she started from the house and (*a gap in the text*) … she started to threaten the custodian (*podvornik*) Filipp, and she said: "What are you doing, Filipp, kicking us out of your house? You will have cause to remember your lack of hospitability, Filipp!" And after that, when the groom and bride arrived, Filipp's old woman (*starushka*) came into the house crossing herself, and he, Aleshka, heard her say that the sexton's wife Maritsa and Daritsa lit a sliver of wood on fire and placed it in the groom's footprints as he led the bride to the bedchamber. And then they (*Maritsa and Daritsa*) peed on the sliver.

Fedor Matveev of that same hamlet of Gorbunova said: "Three years ago, I was in the village of Morevo visiting Grishka Semenov, and I heard Daritsa threaten the priest Iakov and Filipp's son Fedor, saying, 'I will put an end to your family line.' And after that, Priest Iakov died, but I don't know whether he died from her bewitchment or he died naturally."

(*Fifteen men listed by name testified:*) "We heard accusations over the years from Fedka's father Filipp that Daritsa bewitched his son Fedka and made him impotent, and from other villagers and residents of Morevo we heard the same thing."

And Priest Danilo of the Church of St. Dmitrii in Morevo told them many times that Daritsa bewitched his son, the priest Iakov, and from that

bewitchment his son died. And he also told them that Daritsa bewitched his wife too.

And the widow of the priest Iakov also told them on many occasions that Daritsa bewitched her husband, the (*late*) priest Iakov.

(*A group of widows and wives—thirteen women listed by name—also testified:*) They heard accusations from Priest Danilo and from Priest Iakov's widow, Maria, many a time that supposedly Priest Iakov was bewitched by that Daritsa and died. But they don't know for sure what caused Priest Iakov's death.

(The case report continues with testimony from many other people confirming that they heard many accusations from Priest Danilo and his daughter-in-law, the widow of Priest Iakov, claiming that Daritsa bewitched Priest Iakov to death. But, they add, they cannot be sure whether the accusations were true. We omit these testimonies because they are repetitious.)

Filipp Kondratev's wife, Natalia daughter of Terentei, said: In the past 147 year, when in the village of Morevo Fedka Filipov got married, she went to Fedka's wedding, and when Fedka came with his bride and with the procession from the wedding to his house, Daritsa came out of Fedka's father home and met the procession and started to threaten Fedka's father, Filipp, with the words: "Peasant (*Muzhik*), you son of a bitch (*shliukhin syn*), you will beg at my feet!" And at that time, the sexton's wife, Maritsa, lit a fire with the remnants of a bast shoe and put it in the groom's footsteps, as the young people were led to the bedchamber. Then she started acting as if she was killing fleas with the fire, and she said at that time that it was so mosquitoes wouldn't devour the young couple. She set fire to remnants of bast shoes and started to wave that fire around.

Ivan Beliaev's wife, Natalia; Avdei Artemov's wife, Avdotia; Nikifor Terentev's wife, Maria; and Martyn Stepanov's wife, Uliana, said: "We know nothing about Nekraska's wife, Daritsa, and we have heard nothing."

Dragoons from the village of Bylkov (*thirteen listed by name*) said in the past year 1645/46, that they heard rumors from the widowed priest Danilo

of the Dmitrov Church that Nekraska's wife, Daritsa, bewitched his son, Priest Iakov, but from other people they heard nothing.

Women of the same village (*widows and wives of dragoons, twelve listed by name*) said that [they] heard rumors about Nekraska's wife, Daritsa, and about her bewitchment from villagers from Morevo. "And here with us, during Holy Week, she came to a feast and she spent the night with us, and we didn't observe any foolishness from her."

These reports were written by Kuzka Semenov, town square clerk from the town of Sevsk.

(*On the reverse side of the page:*) These testimonial reports were signed by Priest Grigorii Iakovtsov of the new Church of St. Dmitrii in the hamlet of Morevo, in place of his spiritual children and parishioners.

(The case record ends here, without resolution.)

6.3 IATSYKHA POLYVEICHYKHA SEEKS TO BEWITCH HER HUSBAND'S LOVER (HETMANATE, 1675)

Source: *Lokhvyts'ka ratushna knyha druhoi polovyny XVII st.: Zbirnyk aktovykh dokumentiv* (Kyiv: Naukova dumka, 1986), no. 192 (1675), 169–70. Translated from Ukrainian by Kateryna Dysa.

This case stems from the town of Lokhvytsia, located in the newly autonomous Cossack Hetmanate (in what is now the region of Poltava in central Ukraine), which was under the authority of the Muscovite tsar. It is one of the rare documents written in the Ruthenian or Ukrainian language rather than the language of the central government. In making their verdict, the magistrates are creative in their use of the law: they cite an apparently nonexistent article of law in order to make their rulings appear authoritative. The finding refers to a ruling against procuresses ostensibly found in chapter 14, article 38, of the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania; in this case, presumably the codification of 1588. In this statute, however, chapter 14 includes only thirty-seven articles.[7]

The case allows a fascinating glimpse into a patriarchal culture in which a betrayed wife attempted to absolve her unfaithful husband of all responsibility by blaming the unmarried servant he impregnated for seducing her master. The wife, Iatsykha

Polyveichykha, went out into the countryside to consult a village woman about how to get revenge against the servant. In an interesting twist in the story, the village witch was the mother of the woman who had agreed to serve as godmother of the servant's illegitimate baby. According to the testimony collected here, the witch fulfilled her client's expectations. She conducted an elaborate ritual, apparently summoning a spirit in the semblance of a human being and enchanting the dirt on which the unfaithful husband had walked. Here is an example of a woman who seems actively to have embraced her role as magical practitioner and to have taken advantage of her reputation as a witch to supplement her income.

The case of Dmytro Kovter, a resident of Lokhvytsia, was presented before me in the presence of Demko Vyprysk, ataman of the town of Lokhvytsia; Stefan Svyderskyi, head of the magistracy; Ivan Ilchenko and Lesko Senchenko, members of the Lokhvytsia magistracy; and Ivan Butovych, representative of His Highness Hetman Mykhailo Horbanenko, and a Cossack of Lokhvytsia's military unit; and many other honorable and trustworthy people. He came in person and presented us with his pitiful complaint against Iatsko Polyveiko and another Iatsko (*Tkach*) and their wives, saying:

> Gentlemen of the Lokhvytsia administration: my wife's sister was a servant in Iatsko Polyveiko's house. She left his house a ruined woman, and in my house gave birth to the baby conceived in that sinful bed. And it was unquestionably her master's child. And Iatsko's wife, Tkachova, was invited to become the baby's godmother. After the baptism, she sent vodka to our people to toast the well-being of the new mother. The mother did not partake of the drink but offered it to my wife and other relatives. None of us knew what was in the vodka, but we drank it and became so ill that we hardly survived.

At the same time, the honorable man Sava Lekhnenko testified that Iatsko Tkach had freely admitted that Polyveichykha (*Polyveiko's wife*) had sent the vodka to his wife at their house. From there, it was later sent to the new mother.

Then Roman Nosachenko, the boy who delivered the tainted vodka, came before the court and testified:

> Iatsycha Polyveichykha came to the master Iatsko Tkach's house and asked the master's wife to send someone to pick up the vodka for the new mother. The master's wife immediately responded and sent me off with Polyveichykha. When I arrived at Polyveiko's house, I found the vodka in a bottle on the table. There was also a cup, containing I don't know what, next to it. In

my presence Poliveichykha poured the vodka from the bottle into it, handed it to me, and coached me to say that the vodka came from my master's wife. And later she caught up with me near the school named after the Savior. She poured something that wasn't pepper into the vodka, and after stirring it with all her fingers, gave it to me, saying: "Now you can take and deliver it."

After writing down the boy's testimony, we ordered Iatsykha Polyveichykha to come before us and explain the pretext for the vodka.

Polyveichykha appeared before us and said:

Honorable officials of Lokhvytsia, I was sorry for my husband, Iatsko Polyveiko, whom that sinful maiden-servant seduced. I was looking for a way to shut her up so that she would not slander my husband. In that endeavor the baby's godmother, Iatsykha Tkachykha, advised me: "Go," she said, "see my mother in the village and tell her your whole story. I know that she will help you with everything and give you advice. She knows about such matters." I followed her recommendation, went to the village, and asked Tkachykha's mother for advice. She told me: "Don't be afraid, I will help you with that"—and immediately took me to the garden by the swamp. She told me to sit down under an apple tree, around which she thrice drew a circle and told me to hold onto a knife. She herself took some coins and went over to the swamp; she was gone a long time. While I was sitting under the apple tree waiting for her, I was very scared, because I saw something in human form making the sounds of a cat in the garden. Iatsykha's mother eventually returned; three times she picked up some soil and gave it to me, instructing me that when I came home I should put it into my boots and my husband's boots, leaving aside a little bit of it for the vodka intended for the new mother, and that I should send my daughter to the new mother with the vodka. Since I did not know if the vodka was intended for good or for evil purposes, I did everything she told me.

After much discussion, we, the judges, decided that in order to counter the diffusion of witches, who are disgusting to God and dangerous to people, among Christians and to uphold holy justice, we would, in conformity with what is stated in regards to such procuresses who lead people toward evil in the Statute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in chapter 14, article 38, spare their lives and punish those three sinful women by having the town's assistant drive them through town and flog them, then banish them from town.

We ordered that the case be written down for posterity's sake in the Lokhvytsia town book of rulings. This was done in Lokhvytsia in the year 1675, on September 20.

6.4 A CASE OF RAPE AND SPELLS TO INFLAME DESIRE (SEMEN AIGUSTOV, BOROVSK, 1689)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 1133, stolpik 2, ll. 132–99; spells are reproduced in A. L. Toporkov, Russkie zagovory iz rukopisnykh istochnikov XVII—pervoi poloviny XIX v. (Moscow: Indrik, 2010), 331–41.

When the wife of a provincial landholder of Borovsk, located about seventy miles southwest of Moscow, submitted a petition against her husband in 1689, a sensational case unfolded. The investigation into her accusation of her husband's violent sexual assaults on her young daughters revealed a man with a persistent pattern of horrific abuse of the women under his authority. Further, in the course of the inquiry, the wife, Fedosia Gureva, turned in a set of highly incriminating papers to the authorities. Not only was Semen Vasilev Aigustov a chronic rapist, but he also attempted to control women through the use of magical spells. His spells were meant to go beyond simply gaining him forced access to women's bodies; they were meant to render his victims desperate with desire for him.

The crimes in this case are described with a degree of graphic detail rare in Muscovite documents. Beneath the flat bureaucratic reporting style, the brutality of the sexual violence is manifest. Equally unusual is the fact that the originals of the magical texts were preserved and were included as evidence in the file. More commonly, written spells were destroyed before they could be filed in Moscow. Either the guilty parties would take care to burn the incriminating evidence or the court officials would destroy them in fear of being charged with keeping such damning articles themselves. In contrast, in this case we have ample evidence to conclude that Aigustov was a serious collector of spells, and that his primary goals in his magical exercises were protection from weapons, success in hunting, and sexual conquest.

No resolution survives for this case, but in similar cases of extreme abuse (of which there were sadly quite a few), the courts usually, though not always, found in favor of the female plaintiffs. The male offenders might be stripped of their ranks and sometimes of their properties, and the women released either from the marriage, as may have been the case in this example, or from bondage in the case of serf plaintiffs.

In 1689, when the case was initiated, the young Peter Alekseevich (later Peter the Great) was ruling jointly with his older half-brother Ivan (Ioann), under the regency of his half-sister Sophia.

Petition from Fedosia Gureva, wife of Semen Vasilev Aigustov, accusing her husband of violently raping her daughters, his stepdaughters

To Sovereign Tsars Ioann Alekseevich, Peter Alekseevich, and Sofia Alekseevna: your slave (*raba*) Fedositsa, wretched little daughter of Gurii, wretched little wife of cavalry captain (*rotmistr*) Semen Vasilev Aigustov petitions you! In the past year 1688, in June, while he was in his village in Borovsk with my daughters and his stepdaughters, the girls Dunka and Solomonka, forgetting the fear of God, my husband raped them before my eyes with great violence (*pristrastie*). While he was raping them, I pleaded with him and begged him with tears to stop this lawless action. He brought a knife and tried to cut me too, and he slashed with the knife at my daughters with the same deadly passion. And my daughter Dunka is sixteen and my daughter Solomonka is eleven years old. From Semen's sexual assault and attack, my daughter Dunka is pregnant. At the same time that he attacked my daughters, he said to me: "It is time to leave Muscovy (*lit. Moscow*). I want to leave and go to Crimea." I, your slave, fearing he would kill me, didn't submit a petition at that time about his raping my daughters to you, Great Sovereigns. There was no way to do so, because he lived in the village all the time and he wouldn't allow me or my daughters to leave to go anywhere at all. But now he, Semen, has left, and he took all of his belongings and things and papers with him, with unknown intent, and he left me and my daughters behind, naked and barefoot. Merciful Sovereigns! Order my petition about Semen's treachery (*izmene*) recorded so that I, your slave, will not fall into disgrace with you over this, and investigate his rape, and have your order carried out.

(*On the reverse side of the page:*) To this petition Ianka Fedorov Martynov signed in place of Semen Aigustov's wife, Fedosia, by her instruction.

The sovereigns send armed men to locate Aigustov and bring him to Moscow

From the sovereigns to Governor Ivan Timofeevich Voeikov in Borovsk. From the Military Chancellery in Moscow we sent two captains of the

Moscow musketeers, Mikhailo Zherebtsov and Timofei Martinov, and a clerk of the Military Chancellery, Timofei Krasnoi, to Borovsk Province to the village of Captain Semen Aigustov to arrest him and bring him to Moscow. And when you get this our decree, you should assign to them a clerk from the governor's office or some servicemen from Borovsk, whoever knows Aigustov's village, to take them to Aigustov's village right away, without any delays. And write us about who goes with them. And if they need musketeers or gunners or any other support, provide them right away, whoever is available for this assignment in Borovsk. Moscow, December 27, 1688.

December 27, 1688: By order of the sovereigns, Semen Aigustov was ordered to be found and interrogated in the Military Chancellery about the petition above.

And that same day, the captains of the Moscow musketeers and the clerk of the Military Chancellery were sent to Kadashev, where Aigustov was staying, but they reported that they didn't find him there. Instead they took the person whose house he stays in (*in Moscow*) there, Kadashev resident Ivashka Lukianov, and brought him to the Military Chancellery.

And Ivashka Lukianov said Aigustov … went to Moscow that same day (?) (*text is cut off at bottom*). And that same day, December 27, maybe an hour before [they got there (?)], he left to go home to his village.

Aigustov shows up in Moscow and testifies at the Military Chancellery

On December 30, 1688, Semen Aigustov turned up at the Military Chancellery in Moscow and in interrogation he said: This year 1688, he left his village of Maksimovo and came to Moscow on December 24, and he stayed in the house of Ivashka Lukianov, a man from Kadashev and an acquaintance. He stayed there for three days and on the fourth day, the twenty-seventh, he left and went to Borovsk to his father's village, to the village of Myshkina. From there, it is twenty versts to the village of Maksimova where he lives. He went to get hay for sale in Moscow. As he was going to his father's village, as he was going along the River Sara, he ran into a cavalryman (*reitar*) from Borovsk named Stepan Kalinin Bakhmetev.

Bakhmetev told him that his wife Fedosia and her two daughters and her son, his stepchildren, had robbed him of his possessions and taken his horses, on the twenty-fourth of December during the night between Sunday and Monday, and they had run away from the house, running off who knows where. And his daughter Anna, whom he had left with his wife, his wife had abandoned with his kinsman Aleksei Radishchev. And he, Semen, after staying at his father's village only for an hour, went to Moscow to find out about his wife. He arrived on December 29 in the evening. He wanted to stay at the same inn, with the abovementioned Kadashev man, but they wouldn't let him in. They told him that Ivashka Lukianov had been arrested in connection with Aigustov and taken to the Military Chancellery, so Semen went and stayed near the Smolensk Gates in the house of Prince Ivan Stepanov Dolgorukii, whom he knows as a neighbor from the village. And this morning, he went to the house of the high court noble (*okolnichei*) Petr Avramovich Lopukhin to supplicate, and Petr Avramovich sent him to the Military Chancellery. He wasn't at the village where he lives or at his father's village, mentioned above [when the officials came looking for him], and he didn't know that officials had been sent out to find him, and he didn't hear about it from anyone. About the fact that his wife had petitioned against him for raping her daughters, his stepdaughters, Avdotia and Solomonia, he never raped them in front of her in 1688 in June, and he didn't threaten her with a knife while he was raping them, and he didn't want to cut her with the knife for interfering with his raping, and by the same token he didn't threaten violence with a knife against the daughters. And he never said to his wife that he wanted to leave Muscovy and go to Crimea.

In all of these accusations she is slandering him without basis. Her motive is that she wants to get out of the marriage by these means because she didn't live with him amicably (*ne v sovete*). And whether her daughter Avdotia is telling lies (*brekhat*) or not, that he doesn't know, but he does know that she lived in sin with his man (probably a bondsman or slave) Borisko Osipov. In 1687 in January, but what day he doesn't remember, he, Semen, caught her misbehaving with that man in Borovsk in his village of Maksimova at his estate, in the stable. For that, he beat both Avdotia and his wife at that time. As for that Borisko, in that same year, while he was in the sovereign's service with Semen on the Crimean campaign, he disappeared

without a trace. And his wife and daughters, who had been living in his house in his village, left by their own volition to go to relatives as guests. And he never ordered any restrictions on them, and he never told them he wouldn't let them go anywhere outside the house.

And he was going to Moscow for the first time…. (*Part of the document is missing here.*) He came on December 24, and didn't bring his possessions with him from his house. He brought weapons: a pair of pistols and two harquebuses (*pishchali*), an ax, and a rifle (*vintovka*) for cleaning before service, because he has to go in the sovereigns' service on the Crimean campaign. He didn't bring any other weapons with him. He plotted no plots and committed no criminality or evil. He didn't plot with anyone or think of doing so. As for what papers he has with him, he has documents on runaway peasants and loan documents and other deeds. He brought those documents with him to Moscow already when he was in Moscow in the spring, and he left those papers stuffed inside a pillow at the house of the above-named Kadashev man because he was in Moscow in the spring. He intended to come back again soon in order to petition the great sovereigns to request a change of his rank. Those papers are still at that Kadashev man's house, and the rest of his papers and possessions and horses he left at his house in the village with his wife. He has known that man from Kadashev, Ivashko Lukianov, for about three years, because Ivashko runs an inn and when Semen comes to Moscow he stays with him. He had no other acquaintance with Ivashko and no plot or agreement with him, neither earlier nor currently. And he knows Stepan Bakhmetev because he is a relative of Semen's wife Fedosia and he lives about five versts from Semen's home in the village.

The sovereigns order a confrontation between Aigustov and his wife and stepdaughters

On December 31, the great sovereigns heard this case and ordered Semen Aigustov to be set in face-to-face confrontations with his wife Fedosia and his stepdaughters Avdotia and Solomonia, each separately, in response to Fedosia's petition.

Fedosia's charges

On January 3, Fedosia and her daughters appeared at the Military Chancellery and they all were placed in direct confrontation. And in the confrontations they said: Fedosia said in the past year 1688 in July, just after the feast of SS Boris and Gleb, but what exact date she doesn't remember, around midday, her daughters, who were living in the village of Maksimova in Borovsk Province, left the house and went to the garden plot to get hemp. None of their people of the male or female sex were with them, because they all were busy harvesting the hay. At that time, she, Fedosia, was with her husband in the house, and after lunch Semen started to shout at her, for unknown reasons, and hit her on the cheek, and he sent her to the storeroom to get him something to drink. And when she went into the storeroom to get the kvass, Semen came down to the storeroom and sat down at the threshold. And when she brought him the kvass, he knocked it out of her hand, locked her in the storeroom, and went to the garden where her daughters were getting hemp.

About two hours later, her older daughter Avdotia came to her and unlocked the storeroom. Avdotia was unkempt and dirty when she came, and she said that her stepfather Semen had come up to them in the garden and he took her to an empty peasant house and in that house, in another storeroom, he raped her and deflowered her (*ee rastlil*). Fedosia examined her, and on her blouse and on her legs, blood flowed. At that moment, Semen came to them in the storeroom from an abandoned peasant house with an ax and threatened them that they should never tell anyone about that rape, and so they promised and they swore on the icon that they would never tell anyone. Since that time, Semen frequently fornicated with Avdotia, and he strewed his seed (*ee sypal*) and fornicated with her in front of her, Fedosia.

And Fedosia begged him many times to stop, but he would terrify her with blows and threaten to kill her. He told her daughter Avdotia that he would kill his wife and they would go together to Crimea and there he would marry her. And now her daughter Avdotia is pregnant from his sin.

And in this year, the week before Christmas, on the night between Saturday and Sunday, Semen was out visiting, but where he was, she doesn't know. There was a man with him, Anashka Vasilev. In the night, Semen came home drunk and started to beat her, Fedosia, and chased after her with a knife. She ran from the house, along with her daughter Avdotia and her household woman Daritsa. They hid in the granary while her younger daughters Solomonia and Anna hid in the cattle barn. Semen came to the barn and took those daughters and brought them to the house. Seeing this, Fedosia ran to the house, but he had locked the door. She went to the barn and spent the night there in the barn, with her older daughter Avdotia, but she doesn't know where the woman spent the night. In the morning, she and her older daughter went to him in the house, and he screamed at them for running away. They told him that it was his fault, and then she saw blood on the blouse of her younger daughter, Solomonia. She asked her where the blood was from, and she said that her stepfather had raped her. Having raped her, Semen had tried to wash the bloody places from the blouse during the night, in order to hide the rape. Her son Boris, Semen's stepson, had spent the night at a peasant's house, and he was eleven years old at the time. The woman Daritsa has run away and is currently a fugitive. She ran away from this village to Moscow when Semen came back. And the man Anashka Vasilev went with Semen to Moscow, but she doesn't know where he is now.

Earlier, Fedosia testified, Semen raped the daughter of his household slave Mikulka Grigorev, the girl Fekolka, and the peasant Andriushka Ivanov's wife, Tanka. And now that household slave and that peasant with their wives and children have run away. Andriushka ran away five years ago and Mikulka is in his third year of flight. Their people (*serfs and slaves*) know about Semen's rape of her daughter Avdotia: Iakushko Osipov and his wife, the above-mentioned woman Daritsa who has run away; Timoshka Davydov and his wife, Ustiushka; and the above-mentioned man Anashka Vasilev, who went to Moscow with Semen, and all the peasants in their village of Maksimova know, and many people in nearby and surrounding villages and hamlets. When Fedosia left for Moscow, those people, Iakushka

and Timoshka and his wife, were still living in their houses, but whether they are still there now or not, she doesn't know.

(*On the reverse:*) Signed by a musketeer at Fedosia's bidding.

Aigustov refutes his wife's charges

Semen says his wife is slandering him with all of this, because she didn't like living with him and she wants to get out of the marriage.

(*On the reverse*:) Signed by Semen Aigustov

Fedosia confronts her husband

Fedosia affirms everything she has said and asserts that he did everything that she said he did.

And at the face-to-face confrontation, Fedosia produced a sheaf of papers and said that Semen had given them to her when he went to Moscow, but she doesn't know what they are.

Examination of the papers presented to the court by Fedosia

Upon examination, those papers contain a notebook in quarto, on which are written fortune-telling wisdom (*znatno gadatel'nye rechi*), three or four entries to a page. And in the margins around these lines are a graphic with little dots, twelve, more or less, over the lines.

Three pages from the notebook are written on with spells and seduction spells (*privorotnye rechi*).

Six stacks of bigger pages and three in quarto in a stack, and five stacks written with dots for spells and formulae for fortune-telling and divining (*k vorozhbe*). And in two different sheaves of paper, in two separate places is written the name "Semen Vasil'ev syn" (*Semen, son of Vasilii, or, in the format we have been using, Semen Vasilev*), and on the fourth stack, is written in two places the name "Iakov," and in other places among those papers is written "slave of God So-and-so."

Aigustov responds

And Semen Aigustov, having looked at those papers, said he never gave them to his wife. They are not written in his handwriting, and he never saw them before. He never learned any spells or incantations or divining or fortune-telling (*zagovory i prigorovy i gadan'e i vorozhba*), and he doesn't know any. And he has no idea where his wife Fedosia found those papers.

Further testimony

Fedosia repeated the same things as before, that Semen gave those papers to her upon leaving for Moscow.

Fedosia's oldest daughter, Avdotia, testifies

And her oldest daughter, Avdotia, [testified that] Semen deflowered her by raping her, and after that he lived in sin with her. About the fact that he told her that he would kill her mother and take her to Crimea and marry her there, Avdotia repeated the same things as her mother, Fedosia, said before and during the face-to-face confrontation. Avdotia denied Semen's claim that she had been living in sin with his bondsman Borisko and that he caught them together in the stable. She said he was slandering her without basis. He took that man into his service as a slave in 1686/87 in Moscow. He came with Semen from Moscow, but he lived in the village for only a week before Semen took him along to service in Crimea, and that man never served in the village.

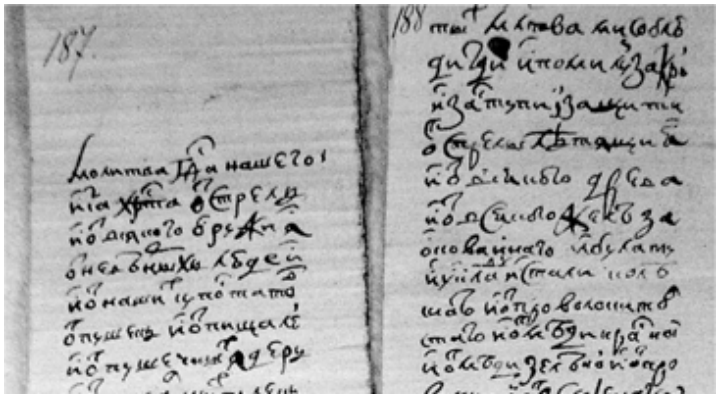


Figure 6: Spell from Aigustov's notebook, 1680s. Page from a spell book, confiscated and presented as evidence in the trial of cavalry captain (*rotmistr*) Semen Vasilev syn Aigustov. The page on the left opens with a supplicatory prayer or spell that calls on "our Lord Jesus Christ" for protection against gunshot or arrow wounds or against "any kind of weapon," against all untrustworthy people, and against "our enemies." RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi sol, stlb. 1133, ll. 187–88, 1680s. Reproduced courtesy of RGADA.

(*On the reverse*:) Captain of the Moscow Musketeers Timofei Martynov signed for the maiden (*devka*) Avdotia, Ivan Baibirin's daughter, by her

instruction.

Aigustov responds

Semen Aigustov said that Advotia was slandering him with the charge of rape, in collusion with her mother. She did live in sin with that man Borisko. After he gave himself in slavery to Semen, they went to the village and he lived there for about four weeks before they left for Crimean service, not for one week.
Signed (*by Aigustov*).

Fedosia's younger daughter Solomonia testifies

The girl Solomonia said that two weeks ago, in the night between Saturday and Sunday, Semen came home drunk from visiting [relatives], and he was about to beat her mother. So she ran from the house with her mother and her older sister Avdotia and her younger sister Anna, and they scattered. She ran with her younger sister Anna to the cattle barn, but her mother and older sister took refuge in the courtyard. Semen came to the cattle barn and took her and her younger sister Anna to his house. Having brought them to the house, he locked the door, and then he hit her, Solomonia, on the cheek. Putting out the fire, he raped her. When he was done raping her, he lit the fire and took off her blouse and washed the blood off it. Her younger sister Anna brought the water to him. And he terrified her [and made her promise] not to speak of this to anyone. She spent the night in that house, but her mother and older sister came in the morning. Fearing Semen, she didn't tell her mother about the rape. She told her mother three days later, when he had left for Moscow. From birth she will be twelve this year, and her sister Anna is seven. Now Anna is staying in the village in Borovsk with relatives, with Aleksei Radishchev.

Captain of the Moscow Musketeers Timofei Martynov signed for the girl (*devka*) Solomonida, Ivan Baibirin's daughter, by her instruction.

Aigustov responds

Semen Aigustov said that Solomonida is slandering him with all of this, by the instruction of her mother and older sister.

Orders from the sovereigns and corresponding reports

The sovereigns order a general investigation and questioning of witnesses (*The following orders and reports on bringing Aigustov's serfs and slaves to Moscow are out of sequence in the manuscript sheaf as preserved in the archive. We have reordered the pages here to recreate the chronology of events.*)

1. From the great sovereigns on January 8, 1689: Two horses were taken from Cavalry Captain Semen Aigustov from his village as payment for money spent chasing him down (*progonnye den'gi*) by the Military Chancellery, and now the money has been taken from his wife and the horses have been released to her with a receipt. And as required, they should show up for questioning at the Military Chancellery. And Semen's peasant Senka Markov, who was also taken to the Military Chancellery, was also released to Fedosia.

(*On the reverse*:) Signed in her place for receipt.

2. On January 18, the sovereigns ordered that any of Aigustov's people who had witnessed the rape as described by his wife, Fedosia, should be questioned. And the clerks of Ivan Square will certify whether the papers were written in Semen's handwriting or not.

3. To the sovereigns: Your slave Ivashko Voeikov (governor of Borovsk) petitions! In 1689 on January 20, complying with your order and instruction from the Military Chancellery signed by State Secretary Perfilii Olovenikov, I sent some local artillerymen (*listed by name*) to accompany Petr Bulatov, the serviceman you sent from the Military Chancellery to go to Semen Aigustov's village, Maksimova in Borovsk Province. And once there, they were ordered to arrest his men Kushka Osipov and Timoshka Davydov along with their wives, and also Anashka Vasilev. Petr Bulatov and the artillerymen of Borovsk took two men from the village, along with their wives: Iakushko Osipov and his wife, Dashka, and Timoshka Davydov with his wife, Ustiushka. They brought them to me, your slave, in the governor's office. But they didn't find Anashka Vasilev there in Semen's village. I sent those people of Semen's to you in Moscow with Petr Bulatov, accompanied by Borovsk artillerymen (*listed by name*). I ordered them to guard them closely while en route. I ordered them to stop over in Kolomenskoe in the post riders' settlement with the full accompanying group, and to sign them over to State Secretary Vasilii Grigorevich Semenov or his associates in the Military Chancellery.

(On the reverse:)
Addressed to the sovereigns and taken to the Military Chancellery by Petr Bulatov

4. January 25, 1689: By order of the sovereigns … Semen Aigustov's horses—a gelding and a mare—that brought Semen's people from his village, … should be given to Adjutant (*striapchei*) Bogdan Anfinogenov to keep during their questioning at the Military Chancellery.

(*On the reverse side:*) Signed by *Adjutant* Bogdan Anfinogenov

Questioning of witnesses

(Returning to the original sequence of the archival document)

[On January 18,] a serviceman from the Military Chancellery was sent to his village to bring his people [to Moscow]. His people Iakushko Osipov, Timoshka Davydov, and their wives were taken from his village to the Military Chancellery and questioned separately. And in questioning Iakushko said he doesn't know if Semen raped his stepdaughters Avdotia and Solomonida, but this year in the summer—but on what month and day he doesn't know—he was out harvesting the hay with Semen's peasants, and when he came back to Semen's house, Semen's wife, Fedosia, cried out that that day Semen locked her in the storeroom and then raped her daughter Avdotia, his stepdaughter, in an abandoned peasant house. Whether Semen lived in sin with his stepdaughter afterward, he doesn't know and didn't hear anyone speak of it.

And this year before Christmas, he, Iakushko, was in Moscow to sell hay, and return ing to Semen's house on Christmas, he heard from (*name is lost in the fold of the page*) that Semen had carried out the rape of his second stepdaughter, Solomonida. More than that, he doesn't know.

Timoshka Davydov said that he heard from Semen's wife that Semen, having locked her in the storeroom, carried out the rape of her daughter Avdotia in a peasant house. He doesn't know if Semen lived in sin with her afterward. This year during the week before Christmas, Semen was out visiting his relative, Aleksei Radishchev, and coming back drunk from Aleksei's, he started yelling at his wife and at the household women and he chased them with a knife, and then drove them out of his house. His wife ran with her oldest daughter Avdotia and hid, while Solomonida and Semen's daughter Anna ran to the domestic servants' quarters (*liudtskaia*

izba). Semen ran over to the servants' quarters, took his stepdaughter Avdotia and his daughter Anna to his house, and spent the night with them in his house. And the next day, he, Timoshka, went to get oats from the granary, and Solomonida was standing there with the woman Daritsa, and she was telling Daritsa that the previous night she had been raped by her stepfather Semen.

Iakushka Osipov's wife, Daritsa, said she heard from Semen's wife, Fedosia, that Semen had raped his stepdaughter Avdotia while she, Daritsa, was out haying. And Avdotia told her many times that after that day Semen lived with her in sin. And this year the week before Christmas, Semen was out visiting and came home drunk, and he started yelling at his wife and the household women and chasing them with a knife. He chased them out of the house. Fedosia and Avdotia ran away and hid, but the younger daughters and Daritsa went to the servants' quarters. Semen came to them there, screaming at her, Daritsa, and threatening her and asking where his wife and older stepdaughter were. She said she didn't know. And he pulled the younger stepdaughter Solomonida and his daughter Anna out of her arms, and, striking them on the cheeks, he took them to his house and spent the night with them there. She spent the night in another house, and in the morning, his wife and her older daughter and the household women went to him, to the house, and he wanted to beat them because they had run away from him. Later he sent Solomonida with her, Daritsa, to the granary to get oats for the horses. At the granary, Solomonida told her that he had deflowered her that night, and having deflowered her, he washed her blouse and the felt on which he had raped her, and he washed the floor of the house, and his daughter Anna gave him the water.

Timoshka Davydov's wife, Ustiushka, said the same things as Daritsa and said she had heard about it from Semen's wife, Fedosia.

The clerks who serve on Ivan Square examined the above-mentioned papers that Semen's wife handed in during the face-to-face confrontation and compared them with the pages of the transcripts of testimony taken during questioning and confrontation that Semen had signed. They said they couldn't tell if it was his handwriting or not because the papers were

not written in their presence, and they asked that he be ordered to write something more while they were watching so they could testify whether or not it was his writing.

But Semen Aigustov is sick and he can't write.

(Some repetition omitted here.)

The sovereigns' order

January 31, 1689: by order of the sovereigns the prisoner Semen Aigustov was given to adjutant Afonasei Iurev Baryshnikov to keep under guard during questioning. And when Semen is wanted for questioning in the Military Chancellery, Afanasei is to bring him there.

Signed.

Contents of Fedosia's papers

(Below are the papers that Fedosia handed in to the court, which turned out to include sixteen magical spells plus a book for telling fortunes by throwing dice. Some passages are impossible to read and in other places it is difficult to decipher the meaning, so we have indicated omissions with ellipses. We are also leaving out a few of the spells to avoid repetition.)

Spell for health and protection from weapons

Mother of God, most holy Mother of God, your slave Iakov, with your incorruptible mantle (*pelena*); Piatnitsa Praskovia, Holy Martyr Barbara, Holy Martyr Catherine, Holy Martyr Nastasia, with your incorruptible mantle (*riza*) protect your slave Iakov from suffering (*skorb*) and illness (*negdugi*) and shield him from muskets and from bullets and from gunpowder and lead.

Mother of God, most Holy Mother of God, as the wind goes around a tree, so may lead bullets go around my hat.

Spell "to get women"

I rise early, I go out to the great elm tree, and I shout out, I cry out in my loudest voice: Oy, you, Satan, with devils great and small, crawl out of the

ocean-sea, take my fiery woe, go around the white world. Do not light fire to stump or post or moist tree, nor to the grasses of the earth. Instead, set the soul of the female slave on fire for me. On the sea-ocean, on the Island of Buian, stands a bathhouse, and in that bathhouse lies a board. I, slave So-and-so, came up: What are you pining for, Woe, what are you grieving for? Don't pine, Woe, don't grieve, Woe. Go, Woe, go to female slave So-and-so.

Make her pine for me and long for me, for male slave So-and-so. As a fire burns for a year and half a year and a day and half a day and an hour and half an hour, so may that slave burn for me, with her white body, her ardent heart, her black liver, her stormy head and brains, her clear eyes, black brows, and sugary lips. May she suffer as much misery and bitterness as a fish without water. May she suffer that much closeness of breath, as much bitterness, for me for a day and half a day, for an hour and half an hour, for a year and half a year, for a week and half a week. And in old age and in youth and in ages in between let that young girl cling to that young man without turning away. Thus let it be and I stand firm.

Spell for firearms

From me, So-and-so, goes my breath. May it not blow upon harquebus or pistol or musket; may it pass by my ear.

About a harquebus: as sulfur boils in the ear, so from any harquebus or rifle of any kind or in a musket or pistol or in any kind of weapon and in a ball of steel of any kind, whether a lead pellet or a steel one, one of iron or of copper or silver or gilded boils, so may the iron not scatter (*seiala*) at me, So-and-so, or at our herd (*stadka*).

As water cannot lift a rock, so may no flying bird or beast rise [after being shot by] my harquebus or musket or any firearms…. Amen.

….

May my harquebus and musket have the voice of a chicken, the heart of a hare, and take my break, and blow thrice upon it.

Spell "to get women"

I bow and supplicate Tsar Inuil and his brother Monoila and his cook and his porter and his servant in the forecourt, and his gatekeeper and his merchant and his tailor and his leatherworker (*shavets*). Take my beauty So-and-so from all the fast-flowing rivers and from all the fields, from the dark woods and green meadows with all their sundry grasses and flowers. Send her, So-and-so, with her sugary lips and her stormy head, her clear eyes, her white body, and with all her seventy veins and with all ten veins and with one single vein,[8] and may she live a long life and may she not hurt (me), So-and-so, and may she not forget me, So-and-so, neither during the day or the night, nor at midnight, not for an hour or half an hour.

Recite this to the Heavenly Tsar (*i.e., God*) over milk or salt.

Hunting spell

Your slave So-and-so thought about and divined the future about all kinds of birds and beasts. As my head will not go out on that day, so may any bird or beast not escape from the circle or not fly away. Place this in the four corners during Seventh Week (*the seventh week after Easter, also called Green Week, celebrated as a folk holiday*), and remove it during the week of Ivan Kupalo (*St. John's or Midsummer's Night, also celebrated with folk revelries, strongly condemned by the Stoglav church council and other decrees*).

Another hunting spell

As you flow swiftly, glorious River Luzha (*a river not far from Borovsk, where Aigustov resided. The Luzha does not run to the sea as the spell suggests*), as you flow quickly, day and night, not hearing (*poslukhovaia*) and not stopping, without twists and turns, all the way to the glorious ocean-sea, so may the white beasts—hares and red foxes and black martens, without listening and without stopping, without twists and turns, day and night, run into my silken winding traps (*shelkovye moty*). Like you, glorious Luzha River, never turn away from the ocean-sea and without listening and without stopping, without twists or turns, day and night, so may the white beasts—hares, and red foxes and black martens—not turn from and not hear and not stop until they run into my silken traps.

*(On the following page [*l. 180 ob.*] appears a picture, presumably drawn by Aigustov himself, showing a man and a woman toasting each other with small drinking vessels. The smaller figure on the right depicts a young, beardless man with short, curly hair. The woman is shown on the left, wearing a high headdress but with her hair immodestly uncovered, flowing wild and free. The intimacy of the scene, the shared drink, presumably alcoholic and therefore forbidden to women, and her state of disarray all indicate that this was a salacious scene, in keeping with the artist/spell collector's interest in sex spells.)*[9]

Spell for sowing the fields

I, slave of God, stand. Blessing myself, I go out, crossing myself, I go to an open field. Bless me, the True Christ, to sow the seed. The True Christ sent Archangel Michael to me, with the angels and with the apostles. Send to me also, Lord, the True Christ, to greedy souls, to parents, give, Lord, something to boast about to good people, and to bad people cause for envy. Birds and hounds belong to you, Christ, as your possessions. And as for my possessions, don't trample or crush them. I sow them for you in the dark forests and the green meadows, and you look after your possessions and don't think any evil thoughts toward me, slave of God, and toward my lovely property (*zhivot*), and I will think no evil toward you, birds of Christ.

Spell and Ritual for St. Egor's Day

(By folk custom, cattle could not be driven out to pasture before St. Egor's Day, May 6. This spell and ritual were meant to accompany that annual event.)

Holy Lords Vlasei and Afanasii, send to me, lords, a good living with your love. Send to good people something to boast about and to bad people something to envy. And to us, with your love, send happy guests, ardent souls, and fertile households. For the first driving out of the cattle I pray to you and praise you, Lord, the True Christ, over wax, over caraway, over a church structure. And if spell and protective charm should be discovered by some evil person, True Christ, protect me with your footsteps, cover me

with your incorruptible mantle. As one does not remove a beam from a church, so may my lovely livestock never be taken away from me for all eternity. Amen.

> Cut two switches from a year-old willow tree and take some moss from a church and feed it to your cattle. And drive the cattle out on Egor's Day, and go around with an icon and candles. And take some wool from each animal and touch it with a cross, and let them graze together.

As that wool will never scatter for all eternity, so may my livestock never scatter, for all eternity. And when you start to drive them out, drive the animals forward, poke them with two of the switches and drive them forward with a third.

Semen, Vasilii's son. Lords Frol, Lavr (*patron saints of horses*), True Christ, send me a horse. Give good people something to boast about and bad people something to envy. And, True Christ, place your iron fence around my lovely livestock to protect them from evil people. Most Immaculate Mother of God, protect me with your footsteps; cover me with your incorruptible mantle, so that my spell and protective charm will never be discovered and I, your slave, and my lovely livestock will never be bewitched, for all eternity. Amen.

Spell against bewitchment of firearms, against witches and enchanters, evil people and devils, and against destructive forces of nature

Protecting oneself with the iron [protection] of the cross from the earth to the heavens, from male witches (*veduny*) and female witches (*vedunitsy*), from male sorcerers (*kolduny*) and female sorcerers (*koldunitsy*), and this prayer also protects firearms from bewitchment.

Lord God Jesus Christ, you Christ, protect slave of God So-and-so with your cross. Order that as I wander in the dawn and at dusk by various paths, I, slave of God, will not be bewitched, not by female bewitchers (*portezh'nitsy*), nor by their pupils, and neither will my firearms be bewitched. Let [the bewitchers and their pupils] be imprisoned in three-times-nine dungeons, and I lock them up with three-times-nine locks. And I give the key to a black raven. Throw, throw the keys into the ocean-sea! And

as that sea will drink up a sea of mendicant nuns and bewitchers (*chernitsy i porozhentsy*), so may the sea not drink me up, slave of God So-and-so.

There is on the sea, on the ocean, the oak Dorofei. Under that oak sits Baba Solomoneia.[10] That same Baba Solomoneia washes slave of God So-and-so and casts spells to keep away, like from a hot stove, cooling the blood, and I, slave of God So-and-so, neither barefoot, nor naked, nor bareheaded…. (*text illegible*) Tsaritsa, Queen of the water, beautiful girl, wash the steep riverbanks, the yellow sands, wash away bewitchment and hexes (*uroki*) from the old and the young on this day and in this hour.

O Lords! Cross above me; cross to me; with the cross I protect myself; with the cross I chase away a demon. Devils run away from the Most Immaculate One, but from me, slave of God So-and-so, evil people run, and the Most Immaculate One holds her hand up against them.

Slave of God So-and So, carry this prayer of the true martyr St. Nikita, and you will have nothing to fear: not from fire, not from water, not from thunder, not from lightning, not from wild beasts. This is our sole prayer.

Spell to protect against boyars and witches

I, slave of God, rise, blessing myself. I get up, crossing myself and saying my prayers, in the dark of night. From the dark of night to the morning sunrise; from the morning sunrise to the red sun; from the red sun to the True Christ. The True Christ sends SS Peter and Paul. Blessed lords Peter and Paul, highest apostles, erect around me, slave of God, an iron fence from the heavens to the earth. And as an Orthodox Christian bows to the True Christ, so may princes and boyars and great powers bow to me, slave of God. True Christ, protect me with your footsteps; cover me with your incorruptible mantle. Erect an iron fence from the heavens to the earth to guard against evil people: against sorcerers and sorceresses, against male and female witches, and against the living dead, male and female (skimniki *and* skimnitsy, *literally, those taking severely ascetic monastic vows, but also used to refer to the undead, zombies, or vampires*), from three-tooths and two-tooths (ot troezuba, dvoezuba; troezuba *can mean trident, but here it seems to refer to some unnatural being*), from ones with yellow hair, from ones hairy all over (*ot zheltovlasa, perevlasa*?), and from girls and women

and the living dead, and from stars in the sky, and from the prophesies of ravens. Thus may I, slave of God, be safe from bewitchment by witches, male or female. True Christ, protect me with your footsteps; Most Immaculate Mother of God, protect me with your incorruptible mantle from every kind of evil. May my spell and protective charm remain unbroken forever and ever. Amen.

Spell against blood loss

Semen, son of Vasilii. The True Christ stands. He holds in his hand golden needles, silken threads. He wants to sew together the heavens and the earth. So may it be for me, slave of God. You, blood (*ruda*), do not flow; be sewn up so that neither blood nor wound, nor you, blood, can flow or go or flow (*ni kan', ni kano, ni kan'*). Most Immaculate Mother of God, protect me with your footsteps; cover me with your incorruptible mantle. Take me, Most Immaculate Mother of God, and lock me up with three-times-nine locks, costly German ones. You, blood, neither flow nor go nor flow. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A spell to make women pine and burn with desire

I lie down without blessing myself; I stand up without crossing myself. [I go] to an open field, to the blue sea. On the sea-ocean lies the burning white rock Katyk (?). On the burning white rock Katyk, thirty-two and one satanic devils, satans and satanesses (*besy, sotaneny i sotanetsy*), run off, and with them … (*illegible*).

Oy, those thirty-two and one devils, whoever of you is the biggest, whoever, the smallest, the tsar-devil is [called] Saltsa, another is Khromtsa, and a third —tsa. Whoever of you … (*illegible*). The devil Saltsa says … Don't go to the tsardom of Sodom, to the realm of Soltsa, the Tsar of Sodom. You, Woe (*toska*), go around the hamlets and villages and collect the grief from every kind of livestock, and from every wild beast, and from every person, and from every grass or plant, and from every flower, and from every reptile. Bring that grief and woe to the slave of God So-and-so. Set fire to her heart with her liver and her hot blood for me, So-and-so, every day and every hour, from sunrise to sunset. As breathless as bitter

drowning in water, let that female Slave of God So-and-so be that breathless, that bitter, for me, Slave So-and-so, now and for all eternity.

I lie down without blessing myself, I rise up without crossing myself, and I go out of the hut, not by the doors, and I leave the courtyard not by the gates. I walk in a circle not following the direction of the sun toward the west, and I go to the blue sea-ocean. On the sea-ocean stands the Island of the Oak. On the Island of the Oak stands a hut (?) made of oak, and in that wooden hut sits a bird without feathers, without wings. Many other birds flew to that bird and brought her the key of Woe (*tosku kliuchi*). As breathless and bitter as a bird without feathers, without wings, just so breathless and just so bitter may that female slave of God So-and-so be for me, male slave of God So-and-so. And as breathless and bitter as a white whale-fish (*ryba Belukha*) in a river without water, just so breathless, just so bitter may that female slave of God So-and-so be for me, male slave of God So-and-so, in every hour of the day. As breathless, as bitter, as the … (*illegible*) beam of wood, from the highest and from the middle, and from the [lowest?], just so bitter, just so bitter, may that female slave of God So-and-so be for me, male slave of God So-and-so, every day, in every hour, in the daytime and during the nighttime, from dawn till dusk, every hour and every half-hour, now and forever, and for all eternity. Amen. This is my word.

Remaining contents

*(Four more spells follow: three concerning weapons and wounds, and one to protect against female witches [*vedunitsy*].*

*Then follow several pages, as described by the court scribe: "A notebook in quarto, on which are written fortune-telling wisdom (*znatno gadatelnye rechi*), six or seven entries to a page. And in the margins around these lines are a graphic with little dots, twelve, more or less, over the lines." These provide rubrics for telling fortunes by throwing dice made of bones or bread cubes. Each entry contains a reference to the abbreviated term or name RTsD, the meaning of which is unclear. Perhaps "Slave of the Tsar D … (*Rab Tsaria D …*)"? The cryptic sayings associated with each combination*

of dice seem as if they would not be particularly helpful, but they certainly are mysterious. We provide some of the most legible here.

Beside two sets of six dots, followed by one set of five dots [hereafter presented in the format 6:6:5]).

6:6:5

You think evil thoughts about RTsD. From all of that, great misfortunes will befall you. Rid yourself of that. May the Lord forgive you.

6:6:3

Think of love. It is within you, and you need not fear it. To that, RTsD. Show me, Lord, your kindness. Do not grieve about what you will have.

6:6:1

From the light to the darkness, you want to go, which means from freedom you will come to a fall, and this is not good for us, for RTsD. God does not aid the proud. Find a way to speak differently, and it will be better for you.

6:6:2

Be merciful. Give your mercy to the most lowly RTsD and I will rejoice for my Lord, and think and say good things about him.

6:5:3

That word is great that you think, to do good to RTsD, prolong your life twofold, and a thousand, so … [misfortune?] should not come.

6:5:2

Do not distance yourself from that speech, and rejoice. Take it on yourself to help RTsD, always … rejoice and be glad like a mother-in-law at a wedding. And in this, your mercy.

6:4:2

Like a person swimming in the waters, so may your thoughts not run into obstacles. With various words and thoughts, about that RTsD, my heart beats inside of me (?), and from this hour forth, no evil will befall you.

6:2:2

Ask of God; pray with faith. Do not fear. The hour will come to that RTsD, about the dream of the Lord God.

5:5:4

Like a wolf, your enemy thinks evil…. And henceforth, pray to the Lord, and fear no one.

5:5:1

Cease thinking and fussing about bad things about RTsD. God does not aid the proud and gives abundance to the peaceful. In the future, set aside such speeches and love one another.

6.5 A WIFE SUSPECTED OF WITCHCRAFT: THE CASE OF ANNA GREKOWICZEWA (PLC, 1717)

Source: TsDIAK Ukrainy, f. 50 (Sataniv), op. 1, spr. 1 (1707–58), ark. 156. Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa. We are grateful to Dysa for also sharing her transcription of the archival document with us.

The following case, which occurred in the northwestern section of the Palatinate of Podillia (now in southwestern Ukraine), provides a window onto marital relations in a strict patriarchal society, in which wives were expected to submit to their husbands' will and husbands to uphold their position of domininance within the household. As in a previous case involving infanticide and adultery (see Document 4.4), the magistrates held the mother responsible for her daughter's improper behavior; even shielding a daughter from an abusive husband was considered improper interference in a marital situation, where the husband enjoyed total authority. In the following case, the husband's jealousy drove him to assume that a potion that his spouse had in her possession was actually a poisonous concoction meant for him. His wife insisted instead that the potion constituted a treatment for some female malady. One suspects that after

having being forced to return to her marriage, the wife's life would have been a living hell.

The case against Anna Grekowiczewa/Grekovychova from the town of Satanow/Sataniv for alleged witchcraft, submitted by her husband (1717)

The honorable Jacko Grekowicz/Iatsko Grekovych, a local dweller, brought a case against his wife, Anna, complaining that some time ago he had admonished her for behaving frivolously and being strong-willed and ordered her not to go to other people's houses or to musical parties because she is a married woman. When she wants to be entertained, she must accompany him in his leisure time and take delight by his side. She does not listen to her husband's rebukes but instead indulges in merrymaking, laughing, joking, and dancing at other people's houses until midnight. Furthermore she received new bootees from someone other than her husband and dared to tell her husband that her paramour bought them for her for the holidays. Out of despair, her husband cut the boots into pieces. And after ignoring his warnings several times, she dared to prepare some poison, which her husband found in a bottle wrapped in a kerchief, and he presented it before the court. She was asked about it in court: where did she obtain it, for what purpose, and did somebody advise her to give the substance to her husband? She answered, "I have a deficiency common to women, and I asked my neighbor Wawrzyncowa Garnczarka/Vavshyntsova Garncharka for advice." Garnczarka was summoned to appear before the authorities: "I, Garnczarka, helped her not out of malice but out of Christian love. For that female deficiency I gave her burnt powder of spring grain and black rose with no other ingredients. She asked me for some because she could not prepare those ingredients at home without raising suspicions of witchcraft."

Having heard the dispute, the court of our town of Satanow summoned the mothers of the husband and wife before us. Jacko's wife and her mother freely (*i.e., without torture*) drank the powder (*which Jacko brought to court as evidence*) mixed with vodka ("before us to demonstrate that the powder was not poisonous"). We order that Jacko treat his wife properly: he is to rebuke her and not allow her to be strong-willed. And the wife is to

treat her husband properly: she must listen to him and accept his reprimands. If she starts behaving in a frivolous fashion even once from here on in, if she spends the night in other houses or goes elsewhere without informing her husband, then for such disobedience to her husband and for such simple-minded behavior, she and her mother, for having given shelter to her daughter, will be flogged publicly in Winniki/Vynnyky.

6.6 SEEKING A WITCH OR SORCERER TO KILL A HUSBAND? (PLC, 1742)

Source: Vladimir Antonovich, *Koldovstvo: Dokumenty, protsessy, izsledovanie* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskoe russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo, 1877), no. 42 (1742), 93–96. Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa.

The following case occurred near the city of Winnica/Vinnytsia in the northwestern part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's Palatinate of Bracław/Bratslav. It involves a high-ranking woman who allegedly tried on several occasions to have her husband murdered by way of witchcraft, always unsuccessfully. The close connections between witchcraft and poison in this case, and between lethal witchcraft and evil spirits, for which the defendant was supposedly willing to pay a substantial sum in cash and kind, are readily apparent. The case is revealing about popular Ukrainian and Polish demonic lore, and may be compared with the equally colorful descriptions in Documents 4.4, 6.3, and 8.3. What is not apparent is whether the plaintiff in this case, Lady Rabczyńska's/Rabchynska's servant was telling the truth. The trial records include only the servant's testimony, which may have been self-serving, either to absolve herself of any culpability in the matter, or to exaggerate or even misrepresent her mistress's intentions and actions. The testimony provides no indication of tensions between servant and mistress. Neither does it shed any light on what might have driven Lady Rabczyńska to plot her husband's death. As an active-duty military man, he would have been away frequently from the household on military duty, as he was on one significant occasion in the testimony. It was not unusual for a mistress to depend on a servant to make all the necessary connections with witches and sorcerers in nearby villages to provide potions that might make a husband love a wife more or cure a husband of some ailment, or alternatively to harm a spouse. The verdict is still out in this case.

The Latin words included in the Polish original, which we retain below, were meant to lend the document greater authenticity.

Barbara Kostecka's confession

In the year 1742, on May 28. The free (*i.e., without torture*) confession of the honorable Mrs. Barbara Kostecka/Varvara Kostetska, a widow, was made in the presence of *nobelium, videlicet generosorum* (*the noble and obviously high-born*) Michael Kłosowski/Mykhailo Klosovskyi, Michael Jeżowski/Mykhailo Iezhovskyi, Joseph Cetys/Iosep Tsetys, and Jacob Makowski/Iakob Makovskyi …. Kostecka had served Lady Teofilia Czosnowska/Chosnovska, the wife of the standard bearer of Belsk/Bilsk, and subsequently Lady Wiktorya/Viktoria Czosnowska, known as Modelska in her first marriage and Rabczyńska in her second. Rabczyńska asked Teofilia to help her poison or bewitch or send evil spirits upon her husband.

Primo (first): Kostecka testified that when she was serving Lady Czosnowska, the wife of the standard-bearer of Belsk and the mother of Lady Rabczyńska, Lady Rabczyńska asked her to come and serve her. When Rabczyńska left her mother Lady Czosnowska's house, she entertained herself for twelve weeks at the house of her aunt, Lady Kamińska, in the village Berezowa/Berezova. After Lady Rabczyńska had regularly summoned Kostecka to her for advice, she began to realize what kind of assistance her former mistress's daughter desired from her. Rabczyńska wanted her to persuade a woman from Czerniechow/Chernihiv to poison or bewitch her husband, Master Roch Rabczyński/Rokh Rabchynskyi, and bring that woman to [her in] town. A woman named Krzyszkowska/Kryshkowska from Lady Czosnowska's village had already contacted that woman. Subsequently, Mrs. Kostecka accompanied Lady Rabczyńska, when she went to Czerniechow at night to visit the woman, and they found that the witchcraft concoction or poison was ready. At that moment Mrs. Kostecka felt sorry for the innocent man (*i.e., her master*) whose life was about to come to an end, so she secretly summoned the woman to the inner porch, gave her a silver coin, and dissuaded her from committing the evil deed. Having been deterred by Mrs. Kostecka, the woman said (*to Lady Rabczyńska*): "I'm unable to poison or bewitch him, because he has an older demon than mine, and that demon brings him soil from the borderland every night."

Secundo (second): Furious with the woman's answer, Lady Rabczyńska started to look for other ways to kill her husband and asked for recommendations about some other "knowledgeable" woman or man. One woman mentioned a man from the village Dobrywody/Dobrovody who had been bewitched and told her to inquire about the individual who had healed him of those convulsions—that individual should be able to help her. So Lady Rabczyńska sent Mrs. Kostecka to Dobrywody to ask the man who had healed him of bewitchment. When Kostecka arrived in Dobrywody, she learned the following information from the man: "This man [the healer] can be found in the village Świniuchi/Sviniukhi. But that man did not heal me, his mother did. But he learned everything from his mother who has since died. And that man is called Liekarczuk/Likarchuk (*literally "the healer's son"*)."

Tertio (third): Mrs. Kostecka also testified that when her mistress Rabczyńska could not find a suitable excuse to meet up with that man, she decided to travel to the holy site (*a reference to a monastery that originated back to Kievan Rus*) of Podkamień/Pidkamin for [its feast day] of the Assumption of the Most Holy Virgin (*August 15*) in the year 1741. She took with her Lady Zofia Lubiszewska/Sofia Liubashevska, her sister's daughter; Lady Dobrzańska/Dobzhanska; Mrs. Jędrzejowska/Andriiovska, who served Lady Czosnowska; and Mrs. Kostecka as her companions on the pilgrimage to celebrate the church holiday. [On their way] they purposely turned onto the road to Świniuchi. Stopping in the tavern to get some rest, Rabczyńska sent Kostecka to Liekarczuk with the following information: if he was at home, she, Rabczyńska, wanted to come and meet him herself. Kostecka was also to tell him that Rabczyńska's husband was bewitched and that Rabczyńska wanted him cured—and this had to be presented as the reason for their conversation. When Kostecka returned, she reported that the man was not at home but was in the village Olexiniec/Oleksiniets. That is why Lady Rabczyńska then went to Olexiniec. When she came upon the man, she tried to tempt him to dispatch evil spirits upon her husband, promising him a pair of oxen, two hundred *złoty* (*coins*), and a cow in exchange for his help. But that man refused (because Mrs. Kostecka had warned him

beforehand) on that grounds that "I do not want to do this, because I remember that my mother once did something similar to a girl, and that evil spirit tormented that girl and my mother; I am also afraid to do this, because I have a wife and children." After she came away empty-handed, Rabczyńska asked Mrs. Kostecka not to tell her priest about this encounter at confession time. When they came to Podkamień, everyone, including Mrs. Kostecka, admitted to what had transpired.

Quarto (fourth): Kostecka testified that Lady Rabczyńska dispatched the nobleman Nahaczewski/Nahachevskyi to Juskowcy/Iuskovtsy, located near Jampol/Iampil, to find out exactly where the Rawski/Ravskyi Regiment was encamped. When Master Nahaczewski returned, he reported that he didn't find anyone in Juskowcy and nobody knew where the regiment was encamped. Then on the holiday of St. Victoria (*December 23*), Lady Rabczyńska went to Zbaraż/Zbarazh for confession. She said that she wanted to make inquiries of Priest Strutyński, who was the canon of łuck/Lutsk and preacher of Zbaraż. After Lady Rabczyńska returned from Zbaraż, she immediately sent a coachman to Mrs. Kostecka in Berezowicy/Berezovytsia to tell her that the regiment was encamped two miles away from Pohrebiszczy/Pohrebishchy. She also sent a note ordering Kostecka to be prepared to go to Pohrebiszczy, and then at a certain time she was to poison Rabczyńska's husband. Dictated by her conscience, Mrs. Kostecka hid herself at her aunt's house in Berezowicy, reporting to her mistress that she had gone to Pohrebiszczy. After a week, she told Lady Rabczyńska that she did not find the regiment there.

Quinto (fifth): Kostecka testified that within several weeks Lady Rabczyńska sent for her again, saying: "I know exactly where my husband's regiment is encamped—it is in Winnica." And after a dozen invitations, she, Kostecka, went to Lady Rabczyńska, who tried to tempt her into poisoning Master Rabczyński in Winnica. Convinced that the innocent master's life would be cut short, she, Kostecka, pretended that she would poison him, when Lady Rabczyńska asked her: "How are you going to poison him?" Kostecka answered: "I have some arsenic which I will put in his drink." Then Rabczyńska asked her to show her the poison. Not having any arsenic

or other type of poison, Kostecka had no choice but to fetch some soft bread, which she formed into balls and then let them dry out a bit. She brought them to Lady Rabczyńska, telling her that she would crush those balls flat, dry them, and make a powder, which she would add to Master Rabczyński's drink or pour into his food. Lady Rabczyńska told her: "I will advise you about how you should give him the poison: when you arrive in Winnica, find a way to be with the regiment with which my husband quarters and get acquainted with him. If he offers you vodka—do not drink it, but if he offers mead—tell him that you will drink it only if it has some ginger in it, and have that powder ready. Drink the mead and ginger in front of my husband, and when you finish, add that crushed ball to the ginger, so he will think that it's ginger and will drink it."

Sexto (sixth): Kostecka testified that after that advisement, Lady Rabczyńska gave her a pair of horses and a cart, a coachman, two coins of pure gold for the trip, some bread, liquid fat, and some other food, and sent her off to Winnica. When she, Kostecka, was approaching Winnica, about half a mile from the town she met a drummer from that regiment and chatted with him, telling him: "I have a task involving Master Rabczyński that I am to carry out for his wife: it is an evil thing—to poison him. But I have misgivings; I don't want to do it."

We affix our signatures under the seal to the text of Mrs. Kostecka's confession free of torture, which we heard and were present for: K. N. Moszczyński/Moshchynskyi; Antoni Wąsowski/Anton Vasovskyi, *S. B. mp.* (*meaning of abbreviations unknown*); Szymon-Antoni Mierzwiński/Shymon-Anton Merzvynskyi, *N. B. i R. G. W.* (*Lieutenant Governor of Burgrabstwa/Burgrabstva and Head of the Noble Court of Winnica*), Franciszek Kropiwnicki/Frantsishek Kropivnytskyi. *Locus sigilli* (*Place of the seal*).

Chapter 7

POWER RELATIONS AND HIERARCHY

Investigative cases in which the participants were, on one hand, agricultural and household serfs and, on the other hand, landowners and masters provide excellent examples of what we might call "social magic," or magic for expressing and for attempting to assuage social tensions. Antagonisms between the lower orders and masters provide the presumptive background for the numerous trials involving the bewitchment of landowners in order to attain their "love." Spells of this nature circulated widely and commoners carried them on their persons routinely, even without a particular target of the spells designated in their generic spells to make "tsars or princes or boyars or landlords So-and-so" love them or to make them "treat them kindly." These spells represented far more than an effort to curry favor with superiors; for the powerless, they offered the only, desperate shred of hope for staying the hand of a wrathful landlord or cruel officer. The need to carry such spells was obvious to all and was left unstated, underscoring the precarious nature of life for those on the receiving end of hierarchical inequality.

Within the genre of "spells to power," effects were generally invoked either through the affective language of love and kindness, attesting to the

highly personalized exercise of power, or, more directly, through inverted tropes of subservience. In either case, magic derived its efficacy from the power of analogy: "as a mother loves her child, so may So-and-so love me and treat me kindly"; "as all Orthodox Christians bow to the True Christ, so may all powerful people bow to me."

While many investigations turned up generic apotropaic spells for protection against the arbitrary power of fill-in-the-blank social superiors, others pulled back the curtain on the fierce tensions and hostilities among people living in close proximity. These intimate dramas reveal the horrors of serfdom in general and of social and sexual exploitation in particular.

Accusations of witchcraft between masters and serfs were generally directed down the social ladder, but on occasion the suspicion pointed upward, as is evident in some of the cases presented here. Sorcery and bewitchment offered a common language of suspicion through which servants and masters could understand the vulnerabilities inherent in their close, unequal relationship, their "dangerous proximity" as Kateryna Dysa phrases it.[1] However, as serfdom expanded and nobles' authority increased in imperial Russia in the late eighteenth century, serfs were deprived of the right to accuse their masters of any crimes except murder.

Denunciation to the authorities was not the only way in which witchcraft operated in master-serf relations, or in society more generally. *The fear of magic*, the fear of a hex or the loss of free will, apparent until the end of the eighteenth century and even later, entered into social relationships between the powerful and the have-nots, and affected social behaviors. In the most extreme cases within Russian serfdom, such fear might act as a brake on an abusive master, or, in hideous examples, license him to torture his serfs all the more to punish them for attempting to bewitch him.

7.1 "MAKING MY MASTER AND ALL WOMEN BEND TO MY WILL": A CASE OF SUBVERSIVE SPELLS (1648)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 567, ll. 202–6. Also published in N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Materialy po istorii meditsiny v Rossii* (Tomsk: Tipo-litografiia Sibirsk. T—va pechatn. dela, 1907), 4, no. 18, 152–54.

This brief report from Belev, located about two hundred miles south of Moscow, reveals the sense of vulnerability that many masters appear to have felt in their relationships with their peasants and, even more sharply, with their household slaves. Greatly outnumbered by those supposedly under his authority, a landlord like Vasilii, son of Andrei Pavlov, had to understand that his superiority had only the most tenuous cultural undergirding, and that his bondsmen and women could turn on him at any moment. This fragile authority may explain why such an apparently insignificant issue as a boast made by a household slave in front of his companions escalated so quickly and reached the sovereign's courts. The man in question, Ivashka Ryzhei, boasted of his ability to flip the social hierarchy with a few muttered words, thereby insulating himself from his master's wrath and making all women, even perhaps his master's wife, subject to his will. The power of the spoken word here assumes equal and opposite force to the power of social hierarchy.

Report from Belev

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, your slave Kostka Sytin, [governor of Belev], petitions. On February 21, 1648, Vasilii Andreev Pavlov petitioned you and gave a petition signed by his own hand to me in the governor's office in the town of Belev, and he brought his man Ivashka Ryzhei to the governor's office along with a letter written by that man of his Ivashko Ryzhei. Vasilii said that Ivan Ryzhei wrote that letter with his own hand and that we should question him about that letter. And I, your slave, questioned him, and I am attaching a report to this and I am sending you his letter, stamped with a seal as part of this collection of documents.

> To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, your slave Vaska Andreev Pavlov petitions. This year, 1648, my man Ivashka Ryzhei boasted in the presence of my man Gavrilko Filipev saying; "if my master is ever mad at me for any reason, then I will go stand at the threshold of the house or somewhere else and say [a spell], and he won't be able to do anything to me. And as to the female sex, whoever I want, even if it is a *boiarinia* (*mistress/noblewoman*), she will throw herself at me." So I beat him and ordered him to write down what he had boasted of in front of my people. He wrote it out with his own hand in the presence of people, my peasants. Merciful sovereign, tsar and grand prince … have mercy on me, your slave. Order, sovereign, that my man Ivashka Ryzhei be questioned and his criminal letter taken as evidence.

(*On the obverse:*) Vaska Pavlov signed this petition.

And Ivashko was questioned as to why he had said such criminal words (*repeated here verbatim*) and what kind of magic he works and with what grasses or roots or any other criminal magical spells, and whom he had tormented with such magic. And Ivashko said in interrogation: He has no grasses or roots for any such criminal deeds, and he doesn't know any. But he did try to use a spell to seduce the woman Nenilka Alekseeva, also of Vasilii Pavlov's household, but it didn't get him anywhere. But since he knew a spell for such criminal business, Vasilii Pavlov ordered him to write it down with his own hand, and then Vasilii took the letter from him. And he has never engaged in any other criminal activity of any kind. He learned that criminal spell from a musketeer of Belev, Matiushka Prazorovskii.

That same day a guard was sent out from the governor's office to arrest Matiushka Prazorovskii.

(*On the obverse:*) This testimony was signed by Ivashka Ryzhei, Vasilii Pavlov's man.

The guard Luchka Stepanov came back to the governor's office and reported that the musketeer Matiushka Prazorovskii died last year.

February 21, 1648: That man Ivashka Ryzhei was given back to Vasilii Pavlov to hold under guard until the tsar's order arrives.

Response from Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich

From Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich … to Belev governor Kostiantin Seiverstovich Sytin. March 12.

Brief report:

> When you get this, you should proclaim his criminality before many people and order him beaten with the knout and give him to Vasilii Pavlov. And here is Ivashko's criminal letter sent back to you with this order. And you should order his criminal writing burned on his back so that henceforth no one would dare write such criminal spells. (*This dramatic public punishment appears in several cases involving written spells. The paper with the spell was placed on the criminal's back and lit on fire.*)

Written in Moscow, March 26, 1649.

7.2 THE SERF WOMAN ONUITKA AVENGES ILL-TREATMENT BY THE ESTATE BAILIFF (1658)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 300, ll. 9–11.

This dramatic battle between a peasant estate agent or bailiff and a serf woman took place on the estate of the court noble Vasilei Semenovich Volynskii in Lukh Province, and it came to the attention of the tsar's official during the course of a widespread investigation into an outbreak of possession that swept the town between 1656 and 1658. Sections of the lengthy report from the investigation appear as Documents 4.7, 5.3, and 8.2. The widely publicized investigation opened the door to witchcraft accusations unrelated to the central concern of the trial, the mass possession of townswomen of Lukh. The extract that follows suggests that anxieties about witchcraft ran deeply through Muscovite society and that they could easily bubble to the surface when the court officials welcomed and took seriously any and all accusations. As in the previous case and several others throughout the collection, ritual action is enacted in a threshold or entryway, the kind of liminal space where magic was imagined to be most effective.

The hostile power dynamics in the case of the bailiff Filka Vasilev and the serf woman Oniutka speak for themselves. Magic was widely understood as a weapon and a tool for navigating the fierce inequities of the Muscovite system, both by those most abused and exploited and by those able to exert power. The bailiff in this case, as in others in this volume, was a serf or slave himself but served as the designated overseer of the bonded laborers on his master's estate. By virtue of the authority vested in him by the master, he was able to throw his weight around in ways that crossed the line of acceptability for at least one of his charges. According to the accusations, and to her own confession (apparently given freely, that is, without torture), Oniutka mobilized what small resources she had available to her to avenge what she saw as abuse by a petty tyrant and to liberate her husband from chains.

In this year 1658 on January 17, Artem Volynskii's man Nikita Denisov informed orally against Artem's peasant Troshka Iakovlev. [Nikita testified that] Troshko had been locked up and held in chains because he was guilty of an offense against his boyar master, and Troshka's wife Oniutka spread salt with an incantation at the gates to the house, from doorpost to doorpost. Seeing this, Artem's bailiff Filka Vasilev questioned her about the salt. In questioning she didn't deny the salt. The complainant requested that the sovereign grant his favor and order that woman questioned.

And the woman Oniutka was questioned, and in questioning she testified that she sprinkled that salt at the gates so she could pull out the heart from the bailiff Filka and so she could free her husband Troshka. The high court noble Vasilei Semenovich Volynskii's peasant Mitka, from the village of Ignatovo, gave her the salt and the spell.

And the peasant Mitka was questioned and in questioning he said that he gave the enchanted salt to Oniutka and told her to sprinkle it at the entry gate, from doorpost to doorpost, in order to remove the heart from Filka and to free her husband from irons.

And neither the peasant Mitka nor the woman Oniutka admitted to any other witchcraft even with torture. They confessed only to the salt, and Mitka said he cures small children of hernias. And that peasant Mitka and the woman Oniutka were put in prison in Lukh pending the sovereign's order.

7.3 THE SERVANT MOTRUNA PERYSTA ACCUSED OF BEWITCHING HER MASTER'S FAMILY (PLC, 1730)

Source: Vladimir Antonovich, *Koldovstvo: Dokumenty, protsessy, izsledovanie* (St. Petersburg: Imperatorskoe russkoe geograficheskoe obshchestvo, 1877), no. 34 (1730), 77–79. Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa.

This chilling case from the Krzemieniec/Kremenets magistrate's court in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, the same court that would hear the 1753 case of infanticide (see Document 4.4), originated from a threat that a servant woman posed to her noble masters. The servant, Motruna/Motrona, had repeatedly boasted that she had already subjected her mistress to her will and hoped to do the same with her master. In our contemporary world, this seems like an innocuous claim, but in the early modern period such a boast suggested a disruption in social relations, an inversion of the natural order, that could only be achieved through the nefarious means of witchcraft.

It is noteworthy that the case initially erupted after an unrelated suit involving Motruna's son was heard in a manorial court overseen by none other than the mistress who was

purportedly under Motruna's control. Only after that dispute was resolved internally (presumably in favor of Motruna's son) did the master of the estate lodge witchcraft charges against his peasant in the magistrate's court. Since few estate records survive, it is rare to find such clear evidence of the role of manorial justice in resolving suits before they ever reached formal courts of law.

The first witness, Chwedko Bojko/Khvedko Boiko, noted that he and his companions warned Motruna Perysta not to run away from the estate after they heard her threat, suggesting that they were obliged to report what she had said to her masters or the authorities. Motruna repeatedly denied any knowledge of witchcraft, but clearly understood the serious legal implications of her boasting and threat.

The case of the nobleman łukasz Jeło Maliński/Lukash Ielo Malynskyi from the town of Werby/Verby on June 10, 1730, came before the honorable jury: Bailiff Bazyl Pawłowski/Vasyl Pavlovskyi, Mayor Teodor Furakiewicz/Furakevych, and City Council Member Kondrat Żurkowski/Zhurkovskyi.

Testimonies of witnesses against the accused peasant woman Motruna *cognomine* (*with the surname*) Perysta

1. *Primus testis* (*first witness*): Chwedko/Khvedko Bojko, a peasant, testified before the judges under oath: a quarrel between Motruna's sons and Chwedko's sons ended in violence. They later sued each other (*in the manorial court of their mistress*). And on Monday, when I was returning from the proceedings in the manor court of our noble benefactress [Maliński's wife] along with Jaśko/Iatsko, Bojko and Wasyl Peceło/Vasyl Petselo, Chwedorycha/Khvedirykha (*i.e., Chwedor's wife*) Maryna (*another name used for Motruna*) caught up with us and asked, "Where are you coming from?" We replied, "From the manor." She further questioned us: "Are you done with your lawsuit?" We replied to Maryna, "It's not easy to be done with it." "I tell you—I doubt that anything will come of it …," she said, boasting to us: "I already have her ladyship in the palm of my hand, I wish I could get a similar hold on our noble master!" We answered: "Watch out, don't you try to hide [from the authorities]." "I will not hide anywhere," [she said].

2. Chweśka/Khveska, Kornij's widow, testified: we were washing kerchiefs with the accused Maryna, and she bragged to us: "I have her ladyship in the palm of my hand, I wish I also had our master."

3. The peasant Jasko Osiński/Iatsko Osynskyi testified under oath: I have heard from Chwedczycha/Khvedchykha that the accused Motruna boasted: "I already have her ladyship in the palm of my hand, I wish I also had our master."

4. The peasant Chwedor testified under oath: I heard the following from my wife, and my wife Chwedorowa/Khvediryva heard the following from Motruna several times: "When you hold hair in the palms of your hands, you'll immediately feel good and you'll know what to do with your daughter." And I also heard those words about her ladyship, which she heard from Korniycha/Kornikha and also from Motruna: "I already have her ladyship in my fist, I wish I also had our master."

5. The witness Wasyl Peceło also testified under oath: in the evening after the investigation, when we were returning from the manor with those other people, Motruna Perysta boasted: "I already have her ladyship in the palm of my hands. If I also had our master, I would only have to fear God." Motrunicha/Motronykha (*another form of Motruna*) also threatened me: "You will remain as bare and empty as the palm on your hand." She repeated that threat several times.

Motruna's interrogation without torture

(A key section of Motruna's testimony seems to be missing here, so we cannot be sure what she is referring to when she says below that "what I told those witnesses is as true as the moon that shines on me," but the rest of the testimony suggests that she maintained her innocence when questioned in the presence of her accusers.)

She testified: "I swear by Our Lord, by our mistress and our master, that what I told those witnesses is as true as the moon that shines on me and the stars that move around the earth. I sent my son to Ochmatkow/Okhmatkiv, where we come from, and I was afraid that he would be arrested there. It doesn't matter if I say I'm guilty or not, I will perish anyway."

Since the accused Motruna did not admit her guilt and five witnesses under oath provided evidence of her guilt, our Magdeburg court of Krzemieniec orders that Motruna be dispatched to our executioner, Marcin Krzyżański/Martyn Kzhyzhanskyi, to interrogate her under torture in order to achieve a better outcome. We so transferred her.

Motruna's interrogation under torture

During the first stretching on the rack, she did not admit her guilt but only swore before God: "I don't know any witchcraft. And I didn't say anything about her ladyship. It's only gossip that Korniycha spread." During the second and third stretching, she repeated the same thing. During the first

burning by fire: “I don’t know anything.” During the second: “I don’t know any witchcraft.” And during the third: “I don’t know any of that witchcraft. You can burn and crucify me, but I won’t confess.”

Verdict

The accused Matwiycha/Matvikha Motruna, surnamed Perysta, a widow and servant of the nobleman łukasz Jeło Maliński, the cupbearer of Wiski/Viski, came before the court after having been tortured. She was accused of witchcraft, because she herself had admitted to it to several married women and four nonmigrant farmers who are elderly and honest: Chwedko Bojko, Jasko Osiński, the peasant Chwedor, Wasyl Peceło, and the fifth—the widow Korniycha. During the interrogation they all repeated word-for-word what the accused Motruna said: “I already have her ladyship in the palm of my hand; I wish I also had our master.” She also confessed before us judges and the whole community during the interrogation free of torture: “It doesn’t matter if I say I’m guilty or not, I will perish anyway.” We, the Magdeburg court of Krzemieniec, having considered our investigation, which proved that she was guilty of threatening her noble masters and benefactors, and having taken into consideration the ruling of *Saxon* (*Speculum Saxonum*) of Magdeburg, declare that she should be punished by death; in other words, she should be beheaded (*which amounted to a commutation of the law’s prescription of death by burning*) by our public executioner, Marcin Krzyżański, on the eleventh day of this month.

7.4 HOW TO MAKE ALL AUTHORITIES SUBSERVIENT: THE MAGICAL NOTEBOOKS OF DEFROCKED PRIEST PETR OSIPOV (1732)

Source: RGIA, f. 796, op. 13, d. 334, 25 ll. We are grateful to Elena B. Smilianskaia for sharing her transcription of the archival file and her

notes with us.

The 1732 trial of the former priest Petr Osipov began with charges that he was improperly performing various religious services in private homes in St. Petersburg. Osipov had clearly violated church protocols, both because private services were viewed as suspect in an era of increasing central control over religious life and, more importantly, because he had been defrocked back in 1723 for a variety of infractions. This case of unauthorized rites quickly developed into a witchcraft trial when a search of Osipov's premises revealed that he possessed two notebooks of incantations that had been written down by his son Foma. (Recall that Orthodox priests were allowed to marry, so the fact that Priest Petr had a family was not one of his violations of church law.) The file begins with Foma asking that he be freed from prison because he had written the incantations when he was only thirteen years old. The authorities, however, found him guilty and had him beaten with switches before sending him off to serve, probably as a clerk, in the Military College. As for the father, they dispatched him to the Secret Chancellery, the dreaded headquarters of the imperial secret police, for further interrogation and punishment.

In many ways this is an exemplary Russian witchcraft case of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, displaying many of the most typical elements. The suspects, first of all, are male, and like many who found themselves under suspicion, literate. Literacy could get practitioners of magic into trouble by creating a tangible record of their occult interests. In addition, interrogation records show that as those accused of witchcraft described the origins of their texts, they often revealed a chain of male interactions, in this case leading back to a soldier as the source of their magical spells. Soldiers were often identified in these webs of exchange of magical texts. According to trial testimony, military men frequently used and exchanged spells. It may seem remarkable that the case involves clergy (albeit disgraced and defrocked clergy) in the circulation of spells, but as it happens, that was not unusual. With higher literacy rates than the rest of society, with a deep appreciation for the power of words as invocation, prayer, or liturgy, and with the gray line that separated proper Christian practice and illicit magic, clerics were active participants in the world of magic.

Also typical is the content of the spells. Among the most sought-after spells were ones like those on offer here that promised protection in a rough world. In the unequal conditions of Russian society, magic offered perhaps the only shred of defense against abuse by those in power, whether in the barracks, on the road, or in courts of law. Fear of bewitchment at weddings and the utility of magical protection, which surface in the case, also figure prominently in Russia's witchcraft tradition. The lyrical language and folkloric imagery of the texts reflect the richness and beauty of the Russian magical imagination.

The testimony of the father and his two sons reveals interesting differences of approach, as well as some disturbing family dynamics. The father seems freely to admit that he not only actively acquired the spells and kept them, but also that he actually used them on several occasions. This is unusual: most suspects caught red-handed with spell books claimed to have kept them but never to have used them, or even to have been unaware of what they contained. The younger son here—who could have been quite young at the time—knowingly or unknowingly implicated his brother as the copier of the

text, while the older brother, Foma, attempted to use his youthful innocence at the time as a mitigating factor (compare with Document 10.4).

Figure 7: Vasilii Maksimovich Maksimov, *The Arrival of a Sorcerer at a Peasant Wedding*, 1875. Canvas, oil, 116 x 188 cm. State Tretiakov Gallery, inventory 11109. Reproduced with the permission of the State Tretiakov Gallery. Also Wikimedia Commons.

Denunciation

In the clerk (*kantseliarist*) Petr Bogoliubov's denunciation to the Synodal Chancellery, it was stated that when he was in the home of that defrocked priest (*Petr Osipov*) as part of conducting an inventory (*in connection with charges of conducting improper services*) he became highly suspicious of him, and while he was there, he found two notebooks of magical spells in the defrocked priest's headrest. The defrocked priest's son, Sava, said that the handwriting in those notebooks reminded him of his older brother Foma's handwriting. Thanks to Sava's lead, Bogoliubov tracked down Foma and appeared in court with those magical notebooks to make a denunciation.

Interrogation of Petr Osipov

While living in St. Petersburg after having been deprived of his priesthood, Petr Osipov said that he performed various services—namely vespers, matins, and thanksgiving prayers in the homes of people of differing ranks. And in cases when he did not have anyone to help him with the services, he conducted the services in those homes with his son Foma. Thus in the previous year of 1730, he set out with his cross to celebrate Christmas and Foma went with him. And two years ago, after having been released on May 9 from being under guard of the *kampaneishchik* (*company man*) Kupreian Perepelkin, he also led all-night vigils and thanksgiving services in other homes and brought Foma with him to conduct those services.

He received the said witchcraft writings from Ivan Popov, a soldier in the Ingermanland infantry regiment, in 1729 during St. Philip's fast. At his request, that soldier whispered an incantation from the witchcraft notebook over water to treat his illness. And when he finished the incantation, he gave him some of that water to drink and poured the rest of it over his naked body and wrapped him up in fur coats so that he, Petr, would sweat. Popov said: "Frequently, ailments can befall you from a specter or ghostly vision (*ot prizoru*), and because of that you should copy out this notebook and use it yourself." Just then his son Foma arrived from Kronshtadt,[2] where he had been carting materials, and he, the defrocked priest, asked the soldier if he could give the notebook to Foma to copy. In reply the soldier said that along with this notebook, he had another notebook of love charms (*privorotnaia*) that make people kind, and also charms to use when going before a judge. And he, the defrocked priest, asked him to give him those to copy as well, and the soldier in response gave Petr's son Foma the notebooks, and Foma copied them. He instructed Foma, once he finished, to put the copies in a pillow and to give the originals back to him that same day. Foma did the task in front of the defrocked priest. Foma recognized the notebooks to be of a magical nature (*volshebnye*) and told him, the defrocked priest, that he should not copy them because of that.

The priest said that he used the first notebook against illness three times while alone in his hut without any people around, just as the soldier had

told him to do.

He used the second notebook for the incantation to make people favorably disposed when going to court twice, once in 1729, when he went to Colonel Koltovskii's house to request alms, and the second time in 1730 after Christmas, when he, Petr, intended to go caroling with the cross so that the people he visited would be generous to him, but he didn't get any help from that notebook because he was thrown out of Koltovskii's mansion and they wanted to set their dogs on him. And when he went out with the cross, he rode to the tavern by the Neva River to carol, and just as he started to walk up to the porch, his horse ran away. He hired a cabdriver and chased it to Iamskaia sloboda (*the postmen's neighborhood*), where peasants intercepted it. He asked for his horse back, but they didn't give it to him because they didn't believe him, as a result of which a fight broke out between them and during that fight they beat him with a cudgel. He conducted the witchcraft according to the notebook in the following fashion: he read what was written in the notebook over some wax without any people present and affixed the wax to the cord of his baptismal cross that he wore around his neck, close to his cross.

Testimony of Foma Petrov

Eighteen-year-old Foma Petrov is an obligated serf in the village Kholmy Rakushino; he pays quitrent, maintains himself by carting, and has been married to the brick firer's daughter since 1731.

He testified that he, Foma, has a spiritual father (*that is, a priest-confessor*), Priest Gerasim, in the above-mentioned village of Rakushino, to which he is bound as an obligated serf. He has made confession to that Priest Gerasim three times over the years, but he doesn't know for sure in which years. He confessed to the priest whenever he came to that estate, when he was traveling to purchase grain from estates near to that village for sale in St. Petersburg, or to hire out his services for carting it there. And in 1729, he made confession and took holy communion with the priest of the Church of St. Matthew, Nikita Estifeev, who died last year in 1731. (*The text continues to list others from whom he took communion.*)

About four years earlier, when he came from Kronshtadt to his father's home, … he followed his father's demand and copied out a spell against fevers, and then another one to take with you when going before a judge. And while he was copying them out, some soldier told his father and him that the notebook with the spells for going to court also contained the same kind of spells that are used at weddings of boyars and chiliarchs,[3] so that no bewitchment of any kind can be carried out at the wedding, and all you have to do with that notebook is to say the spell over wax and tie it to the cross (*worn around your neck*).

Incriminating evidence

During the investigation, two magical spell books turned up in the pillow of the defrocked priest. About the spell books, his son Sava said that the handwriting in those notebooks looked like the writing of his older brother, Foma, and because of that, he, Bogoliubov, having found Foma, denounced him in connection with those magical notebooks.

Evidence in the case [includes both] spells for going to court and spells to the powerful:

(On the first notebook in an inscription it says:)

This notebook is [to be used] for protect[ing oneself] in a trial:

When a person is being judged, he should say this over food or drink, and say this spell over wine, and give it to a flinty heart (*i.e., hard-hearted person*) to drink.

O Lord God, bless me, Christ.

I, slave of God So-and-so, go to the open field, to the green inlet, in the wild woods. I, slave of God So-and-so, find in the wild woods the molten sea-ocean. In the molten sea-ocean is the white Zlatyr stone (*that is, the mythical Alatyr stone*), on the white Zlatyr stone is a golden lock. By the golden lock is a golden key. I, slave of God So-and-so, take the golden key; I, slave of God So-and-so, unlock the golden lock, and I, slave of God So-and-so, lock in that lock all slyly conniving people, wizards (*kolduny*), witches (*viduny*), old oldsters, young youngsters, the hunchbacked, the stooped, those with twisted noses, and smelly students locked up behind walls.[4] And I, slave of God So-and-so, take the horn of the wild bull (tur—*a form of Eurasian wild bull long extinct but still occupying a place in Slavic folklore and magic*), and I, slave of God So-and-so, lock up within that wild bull's horn all slyly conniving people, wizards (*kolduny*), witches (*viduny*), old oldsters, young youngsters, the

hunchbacked, the stooped, those with twisted noses, smelly students, locked up behind walls. And I, slave of God So-and-so, submerge that wild bull's horn in the molten sea-ocean. As that bull's horn lies deep in the sea and no one can drink from it, nor can the yellow sand raise it to the surface, so may no one be able to harm me, nor bewitch me, slave of God So-and-so. From this moment and henceforth and for all eternity. Amen. And my word is firm.

(On the second notebook in an inscription it says:)

This notebook is for casting spells for moving about in the world (*that is, a spell for encounters with authorities*):

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

I, slave of God So-and-so, arise, blessing myself. I go, crossing myself, into the open field, in the green oak forest and the blue seashore. I go, slave of God So-and-so, to the holy Mount Tabor, and I stand, slave of God So-and-so, on that holy Mount Tabor, with my face to the east, and I look and I see, slave of God So-and-so, from that holy Mount Tabor, all woods, and all mountains, and all sails and all birds of paradise and the heavenly bird of paradise, the Sirin (*The Sirin bird figures often in Slavic mythology. See* Figure 8.). And as all forests bow to and obey the three holy trees—the pine, the cypress, and the cedar (*the three trees from which the Cross was made*), so may all authorities and important state officials So-and-so bow to and obey me, slave of God So-and-so, whether on the road or on the path or in any place, and in their own government courts of law, on any day and any night, at any hour, and at any of the twenty-four hours, and for all eternity. Amen.

And like all grasses bow and obey the tsar of grasses, and bow low before him, so may all authorities and important state officials So-and-so bow to and obey me, slave of God So-and-so, whether on the road or on the path or in any place, and in their own government courts of law, on any day and any night, at any hour, and at any of the twenty-four hours, and for all eternity. Amen.

And as all birds of paradise flock to the heavenly bird of paradise, the Sirin, and gather to hear her sweet songs, just so should all authorities and important state officials come together and gather around me, slave of God So-and-so, on the road or on the path or in any place, and in their own government courts of law, on any day and any night, at any hour, and at any of the twenty-four hours, and for all eternity. Amen.

And as no one can catch the heavenly bird of paradise, the Sirin, and no one can look upon her, just so may no one, however wise, with his oh-so-wise words, triumph over me, slave of God So-and-so, before any official of the sovereign's judicial chambers, on any day, or any night, or at any of the twenty-four hours. Amen.

And as this my bright wax shrinks in the flame, so may fury and anger and ferocity and evil human scheming of any authorities and important state officials So-and-so toward me, slave of God So-and-so, diminish, whether on the road or on the path or in any place, and in their own

government courts of law, on any day and any night, at any hour, and at any of the twenty-four hours, and for all eternity. Amen.

Thrice. Say this spell over hot wax thrice, and wear that wax under your cross, [a drop] the size of a small poppy seed, and keep it clean, when you engage in fornication or nighttime emissions, then remember to take that wax off, and the next day say it again and tack on another piece. The end. Amen.

Figure 8: "The Heavenly Bird Sirin," an eighteenth-century *lubok* print from D. A. Rovinskii, *Russkiia narodnyia kartinki* (St. Petersburg: Ekspeditsiia zagotovleniia gos. Bumag, 1881). Slavic and East European Collections, The New York Public Library. "Raiskaia ptitsa Sirin." New York Public Library Digital Collections. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-0b04-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99. Public domain.

Report

In the [Holy] Synod, Foma Petrov requests [that the authorities] enact a merciful decree:

> In this year 1732, in the month of March, I, lowly beggar, was taken with my father, who was previously priest of Krestetskii Iam but who now is the defrocked priest Petr Iosifov [Osipov]. [I was taken] to your holiness's chancellery in connection with a matter concerning my father. [There,] for having written a few ill-considered spells, I, lowly beggar, was interrogated about what specifically I meant when I said in my interrogation that I, lowly beggar, wrote them back then, in my foolishness. I was thirteen or less at the time, and from the first interrogation till now I have been held under arrest, enduring … with no little privation. Also my mother and my wife and my young brother have no one to provide for them, and they wander [homeless and begging] from house to house.

Sentence

Legal basis: Military Article 1.1; Decree of May 20, 1731

Protocol of the [Holy] Synod: Foma should be sent to the College of Justice. In the College of Justice, Foma should be beaten with switches instead of with a knout and sent for service assignment to the Military College. The treatises are to be burned (August 16, 1733).

7.5 A MATTER OF A LOVE POTION AND SEXUAL PURSUIT OF A MENIAL BY HIS MISTRESS, LADY RUSZKOWSKA (PLC, 1749)

Source: Antonovich, *Koldovstvo*, no. 66 (1749) 127–30. Translated from Polish and Latin by Kateryna Dysa.

This trial record includes only the confession of a young man, who was arrested for an unstated reason. It is possible that the identified laborer Jędrzy/Andrii was somehow implicated in his master's death. Witchcraft did not enter into whatever charges landed him in court; rather, he introduced the topic himself over the course of his confession. For

Jędrzy, only bewitchment, in this case a specific ritual of love magic, supplied an answer as to why he kept coming back to his insatiable and demanding lover against his own will.

Jędrzy's confession paints a damning picture of an upper-class married woman's behavior. We usually read about masters' sexual harassment of their female servants and forget that women in authority sometimes preyed on their menials, whom they could get rid of at a moment's notice. A charge of sexual harassment against an upper-class employer would not have had any meaning in the early modern period, and an upper-class woman or man would have been protected by her or his peers in court from a charge of witchcraft. Although we do not have further documentation on the case, Jędrzy might have thought erroneously that a serious charge of witchcraft would have allowed him some legal redress against his mistress's persistent advances. Or, it may have served other functions: Jędrzy could have been trying to shift the blame for sexual transgression and flight onto his mistress or, at a more psychological level, to explain his own bewildering conduct to himself. Resolving the "truth" of the matter remains beyond the scope of our task in this case, as in all the others.

It is clear that the full force of serfdom had not yet been extended to this Ukrainian area of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's Palatinate of Podolia/Podillia as Jędrzy enjoyed complete freedom of movement. He was incredibly well traveled and savvy in picking up various skills along the way.

Confessata libera ex laborioso Jędrzy, incarcerato statuto vigore dereti castrensis Camenecensis Podoliae (*The confession—without the application of torture—of the laborer Jędrzy, incarcerated in the Roman Catholic diocese of Podolia*)

I, Jędrzy, was born in the village of Kowalowka/Kovalivka near Kołomyia. When I was small, I moved to Berezów Niżni/Bereziv Nyzhnyi with my father. His Excellency Szodkowski/Shodkivskyi wanted me to move there. We lived in Berezów for three years and in the second year, my father went to Iwany/Ivany Puste, which belonged to the bishopric of Kamianiec/Kamianets). My father lived in Iwany for twelve years, and I served as a shepherd there for three years. When the first Cossack rebellion began (*probably a reference to the 1734 uprising*), my father and I left Iwany for Borszczew/ Borshchiv, which is across the Prut River and under the jurisdiction of His Honor Czosnowski/Chosnovskyi, head man (*starosta*) of Wierzbowci/Verbovets. We stayed there two years: during the first year, I earned my keep along with my father; in the second year, His Honor Dębowski/Debovskyi, the honorable *starosta* of Wierzbowci's marshal, took me on to watch his horses, and I was there more than half a

year. I escaped His Honor Dębowski's service and fled to Iwany Puste, and in Iwany I took the job of farm hand at Wasyl/Vasyl Paskaruk's place. There I served an entire year, after which I went to my uncle's, the miller Pańko's, place in Poczapińcy/Pochapyntsi and in three years learned the milling business. When my uncle died, I traveled to Dunajowcy/Dunaivsti to see my relative Hryńko, a miller, with whom I stayed a quarter of a year. From Dunajowcy I went to Dumanowy/Domanivy and lived with the miller Iwas/Ivas for half a year. From Dumanowy I traveled to my father's place in Krzywczany/Kryvchany, where I stayed from Easter until the Feast of the Protection of the Virgin (*October 1*).

His Honor Lord Ruszkowski/Rushkovskyi lived in Krzywczany. After the Feast of the Protection of the Virgin, I worked for Lord Ruszkowski, because I was recommended by Lady Ruszkowska/Rushkovska, with whom I committed the sin of adultery even before the feast. At that time, Lord Ruszkowski was away in Kamieniec and Krzywiec/Kryvets for two weeks, and Lady Ruszkowska dispatched my brother, who served her, and the cook with some grain to her mother's place in Mukarów/Mukariv, so that nobody was at home. She sent someone to my father to tell me to watch her cattle. My father so ordered me, and I had no choice but to go. After I attended the cattle, I went to the hut to get some sleep. Lady Ruszkowska came and tried to persuade me to have intimate relations with her. That night—it was from a Saturday to a Sunday—I, not having sinned, fled Lord Ruszkowski's courtyard for home. I didn't tell anyone, because I was ashamed. Early Monday morning, Lady Ruszkowska sent her cook for me, saying that the cattle had dispersed from the yard and she wanted me to herd them. I didn't want to go but my father made me go. I herded the cattle. Then Lady Ruszkowska summoned me to the house, gave me vodka, and told me to sleep there. At night, she came by, tickled me, and whispered sweet nothings in my ear, and because of my youthful inexperience, I lay with her on the same bench I used for sleeping. I lay with her a second time the next day during daylight hours in the manor house. After that, Lord Ruszkowski returned and accepted my service. I worked for him for a year and eighteen weeks. During that time, I sinned with her [Lady Ruszkowska]

sometimes every third day or once a week, or every fortnight or at times only once over the course of several weeks.

When Lord Ruszkowski's mother, who is now deceased, noticed what was going on, she told Paweł Chojecki/Pavlo Khoetskyi about it, when he came to see her. She ordered him to kill me, with the help of the lord's servant Mironowicz/Mironovych. Sorokowski/Sorokovskyi, the lord's servant boy, warned me, and I ran away with my brother [who lived in Żeniszkowcy/Zenishkivtsi] and all my belongings to my father's place in Krzywczany. I stayed there from Shrovetide until the Feast of the Protection of the Virgin. Then my brother and I went to Wierzbowcy for the holiday. Afterward, we went to Żeniszkowcy to see my brother's father-in-law and drank all night.

Having learned our whereabouts, Lord Ruszkowski sent for me the next day. I was afraid to go, so my brother went in my place. Lord Ruszkowski told him, "He should not be afraid; have him come here, and I will pay him for his previous work and that last year," because he still owed me for the first year. I didn't obey, and we went back to Wierzbowcy to celebrate some more.

Having learned that we were in Wierzbowcy, Lady Ruszkowska sent someone to tell me that the master wanted me. So on the fifth day, I went with their servant to Żeniszkowcy but didn't find His Excellency Ruszkowski at home. Old Lady Ruszkowska and her daughter told me to fix a small stable for myself on the estate. When the master came back, he would not let me go. Anyway, I didn't sin with her. During the winter, I stayed in Żeniszkowcy. After Easter, I went to Babincy/Babyntsi and committed sin with Lady Ruszkowska: sometimes once in three days, sometimes once in a week or a fortnight, when the master was away, but when the master was at home, there was no sin between us. I stayed in Babincy until St. Peter's fast, after which I became troubled by my sins. I ran away to my father's home in Krzywszany again. When Lady Ruszkowska came for me, she told my father that I had indulged myself in all sorts of things and threatened him that if I didn't go with her, "You will answer for him." And my father told me to go with her, saying, "If you made beer, you

should drink it" (*or, in the English idiom, "You've made your bed, now lie in it."*)

So I had no choice but to go back to Babincy. On the way there, she told me: "Why are you afraid? As long as I am alive, nothing will happen to you; the master will not say anything to you." I committed sin with her again for two years.

And in the third year, I ran away to my uncle's in Zaleszczyky/Zalishchyky, Wallachia. After three days, my uncle told me to go to Serafińcy/Serafintsi, where the mill's wheel needed work. I went to the miller's widow and [agreed to] stay there a quarter of a year as a journeyman. After two weeks, I went to Senkow/Senkiv for a holiday. There I met Lady Ruszkowska and her mother. She took me to Babincy again. I returned to Serafińcy for three weeks, having taken just my hat and shirt with me. When Lady Ruszkowska learned about me, she sent Iwan Wereszczak/Ivan Vereshchak from Chodyjowcy/Khodivtsi to me. He told me, "If you do not go to Babincy, you'll be neither fish nor flesh." I didn't listen and went instead to Winohrad/Vynohrad [where I frequented a landowner's tavern], when something attacked me and I fell down on wooden planks. I did nothing that day but the day after, I was chopping some wood, when I decided to go to Serafińcy. The next day, I went to Babincy, not to Lady Ruszkowska's, but to Stefan Jałowega's/Ialovega's in Krzywczany. When Lady Ruszkowska learned about it, she sent for Jałowega to tell Lord Ruszkowski to take me on for some work. My lord told Jałowega, "I will pay him what he earned, but I do not want him back, because he always runs away and doesn't serve like he should." Jałowega came back and told me that the master didn't want me, so I went to Borszczew with the carpenter Wasyl, where we worked on a house for a week.

In the meantime, Lady Ruszkowska dispatched Mykita/Mykyta Kośtiuk to me in the master's name, and he told me, "The master has thought it over and sent me to tell you to come and serve him." In the evening, I went with him to Babincy and wanted to go to see the master, but Mykita told me: "Don't go yet, because the lady said that you first have to meet her wet

nurse." Then the wet nurse came with the following orders: "Don't go yet, go early in the morning, because the master is angry, but in the meantime the lady's brother will intercede on your behalf, and when he succeeds, I will let you know." A day later, the nurse told me, "Don't be afraid, the master isn't angry anymore; you can go to him."

When I found the master, he was still in bed. He said: "Greetings, runaway! Why do you always run away?" I answered, "His Excellency knows that I do not want to serve for an extended period." And the master told me, "Let's count out the money that you earned with me then." When the lady learned that I didn't want to serve, she persuaded the master to convince me to stay. He told me, "if you don't want to serve, I'll not give you your clothes." And I started to serve again but only for three days, because a journeyman warned me that the master would beat me cruelly if he ever found me at his home. I ran away to my father's in Wierzbowcy.

Lady Ruszkowska sent Wasyl Czopyk/Vasyl Chopyk to Wierzbowcy to tell me that the master asked me to come back and said that what had happened was now forgotten, and that the lady promised to give me a jerkin and a hat. After she gave me that jerkin, I went to Czopyk's. The wet nurse Jawdocha/Iavdokha was there and she said: "Go to his lordship, don't be afraid." When I found the master in bed, he asked: "When are you going to settle down? Soon you'll be old." He didn't say anything else. So I served him and sinned with the lady. But after the master's death I didn't sin anymore, because I had gone off to Chreplijow/Khrepliiv.

Before he died, I ran away several times and each time I did so, the wet nurse Jawdocha, on her ladyship's orders, employed witchcraft: sometimes she scattered hot coals under the threshold; sometimes she ran naked around the house. When she scattered hot coals on a shirt under the threshold she would put a lit candle end to the shirt, as if divining: if the shirt didn't catch fire, it meant that I would come back, as her ladyship hoped. Boys who saw this told me about it in the wet nurse's presence. And I scolded her for doing that, and once even threatened her with an ax, for which her ladyship hit me. I stayed there until the master's death.

After the master died here in Kamieniec, His Honor the intendant of Krzywczany wrote to the subprefect of Babincy to arrest me. And having tied me up, that subprefect sent me to Krzywczany, and from there Marcin/Martyn Chojecki accompanied to Kamieniec, where I have been under arrest for seven weeks.

7.6 "SO HIS MASTER WOULD TREAT HIM WELL": THE PEASANT GRIGORII SHILIN'S RITUAL USE OF ROOTS AND WAX (1762)

Source: RGADA, f. 372 (Criminal Investigative Chancellery), op. 1, d. 4808, ll. 1, 3 ob.–4 ob., 24–24 ob. We are grateful to Elena B. Smilianskaia for sharing her transcription of these archival excerpts with us and for sharing with us her insights about the case, which inform our commentary below.

Petr Egorovich Pashkov (1726–1790), who denounced his serf Grigorii Shilin for sorcery, was lieutenant-captain of the elite Semenovskii Guards, one of two regiments in the Russian Imperial Guards that Peter the Great set up to protect him. His father, Egor, was a son of an attendant of the royal table (a moderately high rank at court) in a prominent noble family. After joining Peter I's elite Preobrazhenskii Guards (the other and more prestigious of the Russian Imperial Guards), the father became an important official and eventually governor of Astrakhan.

The testimony gathered in the investigation travels seamlessly from the threshold of the nobleman's bedchamber to the tightly connected peasant community on one of his provincial estates. The serf Shilin faced accusations of employing magic to manipulate the emotions of his master and to harm villagers on the estate. The paired accusations point in these two directions, with the figure of Shilin acting as the facilitator and go-between in each. In the master's luxurious Moscow mansion, serf and master were locked in a relationship of mutual dependency and suspicion, with magic imagined as the mediator between them: deployed by the bondsman to protect himself from his master's anger; feared by the master for its potential to subvert his will. In the village, magic was suspected or practiced at equally intense nodes of human connection. As reported from convoluted chains of hearsay and gossip, the peasants of Vasilevskoe were bound together not only by their shared enserfment but also by complex relationships and

hostilities. Magic allowed them a tool and a concept with which to navigate those circuitous connections.

This is a case where magic offered a way of making sense of and negotiating difficult relationships of inequality and hierarchy, hence its inclusion in this chapter. Alternatively, it would fit well in the chapters on love magic, on magical specialists or professionals, or on literacy and orality (it displays a spectacular degree of orality—in the form of gossip—and no trace of literacy). It also brightly illuminates particularly widespread forms and sites of magical practice. Shilin's role as middleman is one we often encounter in similar cases. In the quest to find effective remedies, whether magical cures or means to curse or bewitch, seekers turned to friends and neighbors, who in turn consulted knowledgeable specialists locally or sought out strangers in likely places. In this case, Shilin's hunt took him to the marketplace, a frequent site of exchange of magical knowledge, and to a "gypsy," a quintessential outsider. Along with Tatars, Circassians, and other non-Russians, who appear already in seventeenth-century cases, Roma show up in a handful of eighteenth-century trials as purveyors of witchcraft. The ingredients recommended by these experts in sorcery also match common patterns: roots and salt, enhanced with incantations, sufficed to do the job.

Case initiated by the petition of Petr Pashkov, lieutenant-captain of the Russian Imperial Guards, against the peasant Grigorii Shilin (of the village Vasilevskoe, Venev District), who was found to possess "some strange roots"

The denunciation

Lieutenant-Captain Petr Pashkov: While my serf Grigorei, Stepan Shilin's son, was working in my Moscow residence, some bewitched roots of some kind and wax were found on him. He explained to me when I questioned him that he intended to place those roots and wax in my rooms, right by the threshold that I always walk across. I don't know what evil intent those roots and wax were intended to serve. Shilin also informed me that the peasant woman Praskovia, Vasilii's daughter, of the village Vasilevskoe on my estate in Venev Province gave the peasant woman Vasilisa Ivanova of the same village a pie with poison with the intention of killing her. As a result of all of this, I am bringing Shilin to the chancellery with his bewitched roots and wax so that the authorities can deal with him according to the law.

The interrogation narratives

Testimony of the fifty-year-old illiterate serf Grigorii, Stepan Shilin's son

When he was sent on his master's business together with the household serf Ivan Petrov, Ivan told him that their master's scribe Vasilii Eremeev was not good to him. Ivan asked him, Grigorii, whether he knew of some person who could make the scribe treat him well or who could give him some root for that purpose. In response, he, Grigorii, said that he knew of someone in the town of Venev who could do that or who could give him a root. Acting upon Ivan's request, he went to Venev, since it is only seven versts from the village Vasilevskoe, to look for the said person. On his arrival in that city he found a gypsy on the town square, because there was a market in the city that day. Grigorii, stopping him, informed him of what the household serf had said, told him everything, and, when no one else was around, asked him if he could help that man. In response, the gypsy drew out of his jacket pocket two small roots of some kind, covered in wax, and gave them to him. In return, Grigorii gave the gypsy three kopecks. He returned to the village Vasilevskoe, told Ivan about the roots, and gave them to him.

Then Shilin and Ivan went to Moscow, and for some unknown reason Ivan informed his master about those roots.

A year ago, Grigorii heard from his brother (*more likely his cousin*) Kiril Grigorev, who had heard it from the woman Fedosia Alfimova that Praskovia Vasileva, the wife of the village elder Akim Rybin, gave a pie baked with some kind of poison to Avdotia Ivanova, the wife of the peasant Kozma Pankratov, to give to Vasilisa Ivanova, the wife of the peasant Trifon Savelev, because she, Vasilisa, is having an affair with Praskovia's husband. The woman Avdotia Ivanova gave Vasilisa the pie. Vasilisa broke off a piece and gave it to Fedosia to eat. However, Fedosia followed the instructions that she had received from the woman Avdotia who cautioned her not to eat the pie and to throw it to a dog instead. The dog died shortly after it ate the piece of pie. Since he, Grigorii, was not there, he doesn't know the aftereffects of the pie on Vasilisa. As for his master's testimony about the above-mentioned roots and about his intention to place them in his master's rooms at the point where his master crosses the threshold, he admitted no such thing; he had no such intention and he himself does not know any sorcery.

(Shilin did not change his testimony during three separate torture sessions in which he was hoisted off the ground and lashed. He held firm even though the third round of torture involved a potentially deadly total of a hundred strokes, the maximum allowed by law).

Testimony of the sixty-year-old serfwoman Praskovia Vasileva

Six years ago, she experienced an illness that enfeebled her. While she was sick, she went to the village Sasov in the same Venev District, which is three versts from their master's estate—she doesn't know who owns that village—to see the peasant woman Fedosia Samoilova. The peasant women of her master's estate had talked about Fedosia, though she cannot remember after all of this time exactly which women told her about her. They told her that this woman heals various fevers. She asked Fedosia to cure her of her illness. Fedosia said that she was able to do so, and right away said an incantation over salt. She gave Praskovia some enchanted salt and told her that upon her arrival home she should eat a pie baked with that salt. After eating the pie, her illness lessened somewhat. The next day, she, Praskovia, gave the peasant woman Avdotia Ivanova of the same estate a pie baked with the same enchanted salt without any thought of poisoning her. She gave similar pies to other people, and they are all healthy to this day; only the dog that ate a pie died of causes unknown within three weeks.

Verdict

(*Shilin was released from the Criminal Investigative Chancellery after the roots he had used were judged to be harmless, and he*) was handed over to one of his master's servants with the pledge that henceforth he would not associate with any sorcerers and that he would not take anything from them. (*On the landowner's orders, the woman was also released and returned to him.*)

7.7 SECURING PATRONAGE: A SPELL IN THE HAND OF IVAN SOKOLOV, A

HIGHLY RANKED OFFICER AND NOBLEMAN (1774)

Source: RGADA, f. 7, op. 2, d. 2380 (1774), ll. 7–7 ob., 10–11 ob. We are grateful to Elena B. Smilianskaia for transcribing these archival excerpts and sharing with us her insights about the case, which inform our commentary below.

In March 1774, during a pilgrimage to a holy site, the twenty-eight-year-old military commander Ivan Sokolov was apprehended for possessing a magical text. The son of a smallholder from Voronezh, the nobleman Sokolov had unusual schooling for someone of his station at the time. He had initially studied at Moscow University and then in St. Petersburg at the newly opened Academy of the Arts. Thanks to the patronage of Count Zakhar Chernyshev, Sokolov had become commander of a military column and a quartermaster but nevertheless thought that he had an unsuccessful life. This is why he always carried a piece of paper containing a spell and the names of all the individuals he depended on in the military for promotions. Despite his noble status and state-of-the-art education, Sokolov followed a time-honored custom of resorting to magic to navigate the dangerous shoals of hierarchies and arbitrary power. The spells that he carried offered hope that he might be able to manipulate those above him and win their favor.

The incriminating evidence was found in Sokolov's possession just after he had taken two months absence from the army in order to visit his father in Voronezh but had at the last minute decided instead to make a stop in Pudozh District to venerate the miracle-working icon of St. Nicholas, which reputedly brought individuals happiness. The detour nicely illustrates the easy combination of fully Orthodox and more questionable magical practices that surfaces in so many of our cases. Even Sokolov's spell was full of Christian references. He, like many of his contemporaries, presumably saw no contradiction in turning to any forces available to help him in a society structured on inequality.

Novgorodian authorities had apprehended Sokolov after they found the magical text while conducting a routine check of his internal passport, an official document required for domestic travel. The members of the Secret Chancellery did not share the Novgorodian authorities' apprehension about the spells. Instead, they used the language of rationalist thinking to dismiss Sokolov's actions as the result of ignorant superstition and not of malevolence. They also invoked Catherine II's mercy in not applying the harsh penalties of the law and acquitting him. The case has a great deal in common with a much earlier case from 1731 involving a written incantation that contained primarily Christian references—but that nonetheless was categorized as a spell; it had been found in the hand of the architectural journeyman and noble Aleksei Petrovich Evlashev (see Document 10.4). At the time, ecclesiastics in the Holy Synod were ready to dismiss the incantation as superstitious nonsense. Although the highest church officials already embraced this rationalist thinking in 1731, it would take time to become pervasive among

lower officials on the ground. Provincials like those involved in the Sokolov arrest still feared any type of magic, and furthermore, their jobs depended on their apprehending anyone, even a nobleman, who might try to subvert order and the traditional hierarchy by means of magic.

Note that the names of the particular individuals whose favor Sokolov hoped to win are listed in slightly disguised forms, although his "code" was not very effective, because they were his direct superiors. Presumably the scribe filled in the names, which included his immediate patron, Count Chernyshev, as well as leading noblemen, and Iakov Kamiskii, a member of the Building Commission.

The spell

> As radiance appeared and surrounded them; as radiant is Christ; and as the throne of the Lord grows ever stronger, and as the morning and evening dew steadily fall upon the throne of the Lord, so may there fall upon me, Ivan, slave of God, the beauty of the sun and the gold of every man, prince, count, and noble lord; of all princesses, countesses, and noble ladies, and of all beautiful maidens and comely damsels. And as the throne of the Lord envelops the world and all people, so may I, the slave of God, be sweet and beloved in all Orthodox Christendom, including by the slaves of God Petr, Zakhar, Nikolai, [and] Iakov (*identified by a scribal note on the page as Prince Petr Nikolaevich Trubetskoi, Count Zakhar Chernyshev, Nikolai Chicherin, and Iakov Kamiskii*).[5] And anyone who thinks of doing me harm, may he wash himself in blood and rub himself with tar.[6] Amen.

And just as the whole people rejoice in the radiant Christ's resurrection, may the hearts of slaves of God Petr, Zakhar, Nikolai, [and] Iakov rejoice in me, the slave of God; just as the Mother of God, the Birthgiver, cried and sobbed when she saw her son crucified on the cross, so may my foes similarly cry and sob; just as the glorious sun moves at liberty, so I, slave of God, freely summon the slaves of God to see me as more glorious than the glorious sun, more radiant than the radiant moon, as dearer than father and mother, and sweeter than sugar, honey, and honeycomb, Amen. O merciful Christ, protect me, slave of God Ivan on the battlefield, from on high, and ward off fetters, sharp swords, lead bullets, disloyal and raging hearts, dangerous words, and harsh authority. O merciful Mother of God, the Birthgiver, protect me with cloud cover from on high from disloyal and raging hearts, and harsh authority, by placing me under your uncorrupted mantle,[7] and may God give both my enemies and slaves of God Petr, Zakhar, Nikolai, and Iakov sound advice and meekness forever and ever, Amen.

Extract from Ivan Sokolov's interrogation

During his leave, instead of taking the road to his father's home in Voronezh Province, he headed for Olonets District, where, as one peasant had told him, "there is an icon of Nicholas the miracle-worker, before which many pilgrims come to pray, and when someone prays there, God gives him

happiness." Having been in service since the year 1755, without finding any happiness, and having believed the words of the peasant, he, Sokolov, traveled to see this icon with a fellow he hired for one and half rubles. But he was arrested, and a scrap of paper containing a spell that would make all people, especially those whose names were written on that paper, kind to him was taken from him. The spell was written in his, Sokolov's, hand; he wrote it the previous year after he had found a scrap of paper on the street where the bazaar was located not too far from the College (*government*) buildings (*on Vasilevskii Island*). After he had copied out what was on it, he tore the paper into pieces. He frequently read the spell out loud but did not receive any unusual favors from the people whose names were written on the paper, as a result of which he felt compelled to travel so that he could venerate Nicholas the miracle-worker.

The Secret Chancellery's verdict

It is evident from the case that Sokolov traveled to Olonets as a result of a superstition that preoccupied him and not with some nefarious intention…. Common sense dictates that the piece of paper, written in Sokolov's own hand and found on him, deserves nothing but utter disdain; and he should not have kept it on his person. However, as can be seen from his interrogation, he had this paper with him not out of malice but simply because of his feeble intellect coupled with superstition. Although Sokolov deserves punishment by law, the fact that the error he committed out of ignorance already subjected him to a harsh incarceration in which he was kept in chains suggests that it might be beneficial to him if henceforth he were to clear his head of such superstitious thoughts and even more so if he, Sokolov, were saved from punishment by Her Imperial Majesty's mercy. The evidentiary piece of paper on which he wrote the spell is to be burned in his presence, and he is to be exhorted to refrain from thinking of repeating anything similar in future.

7.8 CONTROLLING A MASTER'S WILL: DIVINATION AND ENCHANTED WAX

(1840)

Source: GAVO, f. 175, op. 2, d. 28, 5 ob.–8 ob.

In 1839, the serf Grigorii Fedorov Sokolov (unrelated to the nobleman Ivan Sokolov of the previous case) from the village of Andronovo in Vologda Province had been charged with, among other things, witchcraft and squandering his lord's grain. The matter had been initially taken up by a criminal court, which on November 18, 1840, notified the proper district court that the charge against Sokolov for plying witchcraft needed to be adjudicated by the Vologda court of equity. The latter accordingly took up the case. The following document represents the court of equity scribe's summary of the case, which would have borrowed heavily from the investigative précis of the local land court. According to Sokolov's testimony, he helped at least one serf try to overturn his owner's decision to send his son into the army for life and to obstruct a policeman's investigation of the same son as a suspected thief. Clients, he asserted, came to him hoping he would enact particular rituals for them, and he gave some sense of what those rituals should entail. Although the report does not describe the rituals in detail, one involved reading the future (divining) from a person's belongings, and the other involved incantation over wax.

In the summary of the depositions of landowners and villagers from the surrounding area evaluating Sokolov's character, the language used to describe the individuals who fell for his fraudulent witchcraft as being "superstitious," "ignorant," and "gullible" comes directly from Catherine II's laws against witchcraft (see the excerpts in the documents in 3.19). Either the bailiff read out this language, to which the witnesses agreed, or more likely the clerk writing up the report inserted the requisite adjectives to conform with the law.

The fact that a household serf (*dvorovoi chelovek*) managed the estate of Andronovo suggests that the nobleman Klementev was an absentee landowner who probably owned a number of estates scattered across different regions. It was not unusual for enterprising literate serfs to have administrative duties and to carry out contracts in their owners' names.

Excerpts from testimonies

February 4, 1840

Grigorii Fedorov Sokolov: Twenty-six years old, literate, a bachelor, of the Orthodox faith, goes to confession and takes communion annually at the Upper Vologda Church of the Nativity from Archpriest Svetlosinov. He has never been fined or brought before a court. He is a peasant who belongs to the nobleman Klementev's village of Andronovo. On June 23, 1839, the

peasant Andreian Ivanov of the village Tatarovo, who belongs to the nobleman Neelov, brought him, Grigorii, several of his belongings, which were identified in the questioning. He gave them to him because he, Grigorii, knows the art of divination, and he was to conduct a divination session for Ivanov in July 1839 on a Sunday before St. Elijah's Day (*July 20*), prior to the divine liturgy. He, Grigorii, was standing on the porch of the Church of the Nativity with the peasants Ivan Mikhailov and Ilia Andreev of the village Putiatino, when Andreian Ivanov, hatless and dressed in only a shirt, summoned him from behind the fence.

(Andreian Ivanov denied bringing any of his belongings to Sokolov and asking him to divine over them.)

Andreian Ivanov's wife testified that in the previous summer of 1839—she doesn't know the month and day because she is illiterate—she remembers only that the district police officer was in the village on that day. She had gone to the village Pautovo to the home of the free farmer Mikhail Kozmin. There she asked the peasant Grigorii Fedorov from the nobleman Klementev's village Andronovo to help her young grandson, who was suffering pain from (*kidney or bladder*) stones. He said that he didn't know anything about that disease, so she left. She didn't notice her husband having any items with him and said that he never took such things to the village Andronovo.

February 18, 1840

(The bailiff Smekalov took depositions from the peasants Grigorii Sokolov and Andreian Ivanov. Sokolov stood by his original testimony and Ivanov denied Sokolov's allegations. At this time, another witness, the peasant woman Veliaminova, said that she had summoned Sokolov to examine her ill grandson, but not for purposes of divination.)

May 19, 1840

Grigorii Fedorov Sokolov elaborated upon his February 4 testimony. He said that he had initially helped Andreian Ivanov by saying an incantation over wax so that Ivanov would be able to approach his master and persuade

him not to send his son Flegont into the army. And last July, in 1839, on a Sunday before St. Elijah's Day, Andreian Ivanov summoned him, Sokolov, from behind the fence of their parish Church of the Nativity and told him that the district police officer was about to investigate the theft of some property from Prince Gorchakov's household servants in the village Ermolovo. Since his son Flegont was a suspect in the crime, Ivanov asked him, Sokolov, to incant over wax again, this time to find out how to approach the police officer so that his son Flegont would not be found guilty, but Sokolov did not do this.

May 21, 1840

According to the eighth revision (*census*), the peasant Grigorii Fedorov belonging to the serfowner Klementev's estate of the village of Andronovo was nineteen years old.

May 22, 1840

The bailiff Smekalov took depositions from thirty-one persons of various landowners and villages under oath.

They testified that they know the peasant Grigorii Fedorov Sokolov fairly well and that he behaves badly and he corrupts superstitious and ignorant people with his immoral behavior. He conjures by whispering all kinds of nonsense. He says incantations over wax and water, and persuades gullible people that they will earn the kindness of their masters and officials. Along with that he cheats them out of money, which he uses to get drunk and commit debauchery. He hasn't the slightest desire to be a good community member.

November 22, 1840

The investigation of November 22 of the defendant Sokolov for witchcraft, prior to the case being handed over to the court of equity, revealed that he had said incantations over wax and possessed texts about childbirth and fevers and that he was not subjected to torture in his initial questioning.

Verdict of January 8, 1841

For deceiving and taking money and goods from superstitious and gullible people by means of trumped up witchcraft, money which Sokolov spent on drink and debauchery, and on the basis of the Law Code, volume 15, articles 3, 112, 202, 422, 749, 1030, and 1031, the court sentenced him to ten strikes of the lash to be carried out by the lower attendant of the local land police. This was also based on the testimonies under oath of thirty-one peasants belonging to various serf estates regarding his dreadful conduct and swindling money from people for witchcraft, which he spends on drink and debauchery, as well as his disdain for proper communal living. In response to the request of the household servant Filaret Andreev, who managed Lord Klementev's estate and had power of attorney over it, to the Vologda district court that Sokolov not be returned to the estate because of his immoral ways and the danger he posed to communal life and his unsuitability for military service, the court ordered, on the basis of article 111 of the same volume 15 [of the Law Code], that he be exiled to Siberia.

Chapter 8

POSSESSION

Klikushestvo, usually translated as "shrieking" or "possession," was a particularly dramatic form of magical affliction, one that horrified Russian communities and fascinated onlookers by its nightmarish manifestations. It might attack a solitary victim, or it might sweep through entire villages or towns, entrapping dozens or even hundreds in its contagion. *Klikushi*, or "shriekers," those affected by the condition, were easily recognizable by their symptoms. They "shrieked," not only in the terms and tones of human speech but also in the harsh voices of wild beasts. They shrieked profanities "not pleasing to man or God" and uttered guttural noises. They grunted and whistled and hiccupped. Victims barked like dogs, growled like bears, and honked like geese. They lost control of their bodies and contorted themselves in pain. They tore their hair and clothing, writhed on the ground, and temporarily lost consciousness during church services or when they came in contact with holy objects. In their testimony, they sometimes recalled intense vertigo and a sense of crushing claustrophobia as the walls closed in and breathing grew difficult. During or after the episodes, some of the afflicted identified particular individuals as the source of their condition. As news of the afflictions spread and as formal investigations began, the label of "witch" sometimes attached itself to the people whose names the

shriekers cried out and witchcraft came to be understood as the cause of the fits.

Demonic possession appeared in seventeenth-century Muscovite witchcraft trials as primarily an affliction of women, although in Russian Orthodox miracle tales connected to saints' lives, the possessed were often men. As recorded in both miracle tales and court records, possession was often, but not always, attributed to the malevolent acts of witches and sorcerers. *Porcha*, or "spoiling," was understood as a condition that would overcome its victims, either as a result of direct demonic assault or due to forces unleashed by witches. *Porcha* might be released on the wind or carried through the streets by a black dog sprinkled with bewitched salt, as attested in the Lukh case (see Document 8.2) from 1656–58, or might creep into a person left vulnerable through improper rites of baptism, as in the terrifying seventeenth-century "Tale of the Demoniac Solomonia."[1]

The "Tale of the Demoniac Solomonia" is not reproduced here, because we have opted to include legal texts rather than tales. However, the narrative features yet another aspect of possession that crops up occasionally in court records from the seventeenth century and more insistently in later centuries. Poor Solomonia, inadequately protected by the inattentive services of her baptizing priest in infancy and then deceived by a demon in the form of her husband, is occupied by a host of blue demons who lodge in her womb. She suffers hideous torments at their hands and unwillingly gives birth to at least 1,700 of them. Although her story remains unmatched in terms of sheer numbers, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was not unusual for spectators in a possession drama in imperial Russia to attest to the fact that when a demon or group of demons abandoned a victim's body, they saw some sort of vapor or, as in the cases of Maria Semenova in 1732 and Irina Ivanova in 1737, a black object akin to a reptile, moustache, or wet crow. Semenova later admitted that she had experimented with putting two bundles of her hair in her mouth so that it would look as though a demon was about to emerge from her innards.[2] In the late nineteenth century, Father Shalabanov of the Siberian village Pokrovskoe, in Kainsk District (Tobolsk Province) read exorcist prayers over the bewitched Varvara

Stepanova Kostina of the village Turumova. When he forced her to drink a special holy oil intended for the sick, she vomited decomposed fish, mice, and six frogs.[3] Sometimes women gave their demons names, as women accused of witchcraft in England often named their supposed "familiars." Some of the names, such as "Cry Baby" (*Plaksivoi*) and "Joker" (*Khokhotun*), are ironic and playful; others—"Jabber" (*Potykalo*) and "Emaciator" (*Prochakha*)—are obviously not (see Documents 4.10 and 10.5).

Another disturbing condition in Muscovy and imperial Russia, often but not always observed alongside the other characteristics of *klikushestvo* and sometimes thrown into general symptomology of possession, was *ikota*—literally, hiccuping. The symptoms of the ailment would have been akin to those of *klikushestvo*, except that instead of shrieking in the voices of wild animals during seizures, the victims experienced continuous and painful hiccups, which meant that they would have uttered words in a staccato fashion. *Ikota* almost always appeared in the form of frightening epidemics in which the numerous victims identified a whole host of people as their tormentors. The mid-seventeenth-century Lukh epidemic of demonic possession (see Document 4.7), in which hiccuping was identified as a major symptom, ultimately claimed forty afflicted sufferers and seven accused perpetrators. The hiccuping outbreak precipitated a major trial that lasted for several years. In the mid-1720s, an epidemic of *ikota* began in Mezensk District in Archangel Province. It caught the attention of the Senate, imperial Russia's highest court, a full decade later in the summer and fall of 1737, after it had affected two hundred men and women spread across several villages. The victims identified eight individuals they believed to have bewitched or hexed them. In that case close to three hundred witnesses attested to the good characters of the accused men.[4]

With their dramatic manifestations, *klikushestvo* and *ikota* in the Russian lands and the less dramatic (but no less frightening) forms of demonic possession in the Ukrainian lands (as exemplified in Document 8.3) involved families and communities in shared collective performances. Performance in this sense does not connote any falsehood; rather it

underscores the extent to which possession can never be a truly solitary act. It is theatrical in its essence, a public performance. Without an audience to attest to its authenticity and to identify its causes, it would fizzle. A person barking and writhing all alone would go unnoticed, and if seen might be understood as just odd; someone doing so without the community's stamp of authenticity might be labeled mad. Collective consensus, a shared assessment between afflicted and witnesses, completed and validated possession cases. Community observers supported the victims with calls for justice and reported the accusations they made while in the throes of their fits.

From the time of Peter the Great on, possession, with its noisy theatricality and tendency toward contagion, increasingly drew the attention of Russian authorities, of educated elites, and of foreign travelers. Shriekers came to occupy a central position in the imagination of westernized elites as they struggled to understand who they were in the world and what defined "Russia" as a distinctive people and culture. Whereas seventeenth-century courts took charges of *porcha*, spoiling, deadly seriously and prosecuted the accused witches with the full force of the law, Peter introduced a sharp element of doubt into the proceedings. While committed to eradicating what he saw as a genuine threat from diabolical witchcraft, he approached shriekers with the utmost skepticism. Perhaps they offended his vision of an orderly, rationalist state, or perhaps they represented the worst of the backward, ignorant, superstitious culture that he hoped to transform. At any rate, his laws (see Document 3.12) shifted the presumption of guilt from the individuals accused of unleashing *porcha* to those "pretending" to be possessed.

Suspicion of shriekers and hiccupers as fakers and malingerers continued to characterize official attitudes in Russia through the eighteenth century. This derisive posture may have been reinforced by a dismissive attitude toward the primarily female and overwhelmingly low-ranking populations that fell victim to possession.

We can see this presumption of fraudulence and pretense in the authorities' approach to the mass epidemic of *ikota,* mentioned above, that

erupted in Mezensk District in the 1720s and 1730s. Still believing in the power of torture to elicit the truth, the Senate judges ordered the Archangel provincial authorities to subject a few of the victims of possession (rather than their accused possessors) to physical torments during their interrogations to find out if their afflictions were genuine. In this case, however, the torture did not break the victims' will. On January 11, 1740, for lack of evidence, the Senate chose not to prosecute either the accused or the individuals with the mysterious ailment, but the epidemic itself had staying power in historical memory as an example of how social tensions within rural communities could spiral out of control if order was not restored as quickly as possible by medical and civil authorities.[5]

As the eighteenth century drew to a close and moved into the nineteenth, official Russian attitudes toward the problem began to shift. Catherine the Great's introduction of the courts of equity changed the basic ground rules of the legal system by mandating that judges administer justice with "mercy," because witchcraft and other "superstitious" behaviors might stem from the "stupidity" or "ignorance" of individuals not fully responsible for their actions. Even if an unlettered peasant woman falsely claimed to be possessed, her behavior could be excused as a product of ignorance. Further, with the gradual decriminalization of witchcraft itself, the consequences of false accusations of sorcery were far less grave than they had been earlier. Rather than doom an innocent neighbor to death or exile as had been the case earlier, a frivolous charge would at worst subject the accused to some kind of censure, church penance, or minor disciplinary penalty.

If Catherine began the move toward lightening the punishment of accused witches and their purported victims alike, the nineteenth century saw a sharp turn toward taking the phenomenon of shrieking seriously among the educated classes. In the writings of intellectuals and professionals, novelists, physicians, psychologists, and ethnographers, the possessed, along with holy fools and singing coachmen, came to embody Russia itself, in all its virtues and all its travails. Some, those of a Slavophilic cast of mind, viewed the longsuffering women who shrieked and writhed in Russian villages as personifications of Russian Orthodox piety. According to

them, these women gave themselves up uncomplainingly to the spiritual forces so alive in their world and testified to the living faith. Others, more associated with a burgeoning social science, explained the women's suffering as emblematic of the terrible costs of serfdom and its aftermath. They interpreted the women's agonies as expressions of the oppression inflicted on them as occupiers of the lowest rung of a patriarchal hierarchy, in which violent interactions and crushing, relentless toil left peasant women depleted and helpless. Possession, they thought, expressed the women's desperation. Here too, the suffering woman came to represent the sufferings of Mother Russia herself. Finally, the medical profession weighed in with its scientific confidence. As we see in some of the cases in this chapter, their diagnosis was clear: what they observed was a classic manifestation of hysteria, itself a natural and inevitable consequence of the flawed construction of a woman's body. No need to worry excessively, these male doctors assured themselves and the authorities. The commotion would subside, and the foolish women would get back to work.[6]

8.1 BEWITCHMENT AT A COMMUNAL BANQUET: THE PETITION OF IVAN SHENIN (1611)

Source: Russian National Library, "Sobranie Pogodina," no. 1593, l. 1 (glued to the binding). We are grateful to Aleksandr Lavrov for transcribing this document and sharing with us his unpublished analysis and commentary, which we provide here.[7]

Ivan Shenin's petition is related to the events of the Time of Troubles, a period of civil war and foreign invasion that occurred as a result of the dying out of the ancient Riurikid dynasty in 1598. The period formally ended with the election of the first Romanov, Mikhail, in 1613. After Tsar Vasilii Shuiskii (formerly a Muscovite boyar) had been removed from the throne in July 1610, political authority was formally transferred to the Boyar Council (the so-called Rule of the Seven Boyars) in Moscow. However, not everyone recognized that government's legitimacy. Some factions supported the candidacy of

Prince Władysław of Poland, while others backed the Second False Dmitrii, one of three pretenders to the throne who deceivingly claimed to be the living son of Ivan the Terrible and therefore rightful heir to the throne (the real tsarevich Dmitrii had died in 1591). Still other factions preferred the authority of the First Militia, composed of gentry and Cossack forces, which had laid siege to Moscow in opposition to the Polish intervention.[8] That government was composed of the triumvirate of Prokopii Liapunov, a provincial landholder and gentryman; the boyar Prince Dmitrii Timofeevich Trubetskoi; and Ivan Zarutskii, a leader (ataman) of the Don Cossacks.[9] With Liapunov's death on July 22, 1611, petitions and correspondence were addressed thereafter only to Trubetskoi and Zarutskii, "Muscovite government leaders, boyars, and governors."[10] Shenin's petition follows this pattern, indicating that he kept abreast of the latest shifts in the political and diplomatic rollercoaster of the Time of Troubles.

Shenin's petition is one of the few documents relating to witchcraft that survived the Moscow fire of 1626. Though brief, it is tremendously valuable and an exciting find. It was preserved glued to the binding of a manuscript collection that was part of a private library.[11] Besides testifying to the legitimacy of the First Militia's authority in some circles, it is the only known case of witchcraft addressed to that leadership. As far as we know, no similar document exists for the Second Militia. Finally, Shenin's accusation is one of the first secular documents to refer to *klikushestvo* or "shrieking," the topic of this chapter. In this case identified by Shenin, the "spoiling (*porcha*)" or bewitchment that caused his wife to become a shrieker took place in the midst of a community banquet of parishioners that occurred on a Sunday. Such celebratory repasts, to which members of other parishes were invited or welcomed, usually occurred either on the eve or day of a major church holiday. While there are other Muscovite materials linking witchcraft to religious feasts, comparable cases do not exist for Ukraine.

The secret petition of Ivan Shenin, a peasant of Ponizov District, Onega Region, against Kozma Dubnishin accusing him of "spoiling" his wife Akulina Ignateva after October 20, 1611

To the rulers of the Great Russian realm, the Muscovite state, to boyars-governors Prince Dmitrii Timofeevich Trubetskoi and Ivan Martinovich Zarutskii, Ivashko Semenov Shenin, a resident of Ponizov District, Onega Region, petitions to you against Kozma Ievlev Dubnishin of the same district. In this year, Sovereigns, in 1611, a week after St. Demetrius (of Thessaloniki's) Saturday (October 26),[12] I hosted a community feast, during which, Sovereigns, Kozma bewitched my wife Okulinitsa Ignateva's heart. As a result, Sovereigns, she howls against him every day and barely comes back from the dead. Only death will befall my wife, Sovereigns. Kozma is

her foe. Sovereign boyars and governors, have mercy upon me, take up my petition and denunciation and have them registered. Sovereigns, have mercy!

8.2 TESTIMONY OF THE BEWITCHED FROM THE POSSESSION OUTBREAK IN LUKH (1656–58)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 300, ll. 12–25.

The possession outbreak in Lukh, featured in Document 4.7, was remarkable for its scale and intensity, and for the thoroughness of its documentation. It also gives unique access to the experience of possession from the vantage point of the afflicted and from that of the concerned family members who witnessed their suffering. Ivan Romanchiukov, a special investigator (*syshchik*) sent from Moscow, recorded the testimony that follows. He questioned the possessed women first, and then their husbands, fathers, and fathers-in-law.

The women's words assumed tremendous weight in these hearings and in fact determined the direction of the trial. In their delirious fits, they cried out names or sometimes cryptic identifiers like "master" or "surety signer." With these incriminating utterances, attested by the audiences who heard them, they were able to train the eye of the court on particular individuals. Most of the women claimed they remembered nothing of what they said during their fits, though some of them took more forceful positions. Most striking is that of Manka, Stenka Kipreianov Popov's daughter and Kozarko's wife, who was forthright in her accusation of the wandering minstrel (*skomorokh*) with whom she had an altercation. We rarely have an opportunity to see Muscovite women actively taking matters in their own hands as we do here, with the frightened men following their leads. The court scribes shift back and forth between recording the women's testimony in first and third person—that is, in direct quotes or in reported speech. In either case, though, the timbre of the women's voices and the intensity of their testimony can be heard.

Many of the women experienced the onset of their symptoms while at church or during Lenten meals. Several of them undertook pilgrimages and prayer to counteract the possession, while others consulted healers to "unwitch" them (a term used in early modern Europe, though not in Muscovy) in hopes of dispelling the affliction. These responses point to the location of witchcraft and magic at an uneasy juncture between Orthodoxy and less formal folk practice.

The responses of the women are quite repetitive, so we have streamlined them to include the novelties introduced in particular testimonies. What is lost in this editing process, though, is an intriguing pattern: the testimonies tend to grow sequentially, each including new elements introduced in previous ones. For instance, although each victim of bewitchment concludes with the disclaimer that she, the witness, had no quarrels with anyone, in later instances the women start explaining why that is the case: they are poor and don't go around to feasts—in other words, they socialize little and can't afford to alienate potential providers of charity. This tendency to build on prior templates suggests either that the women were comparing notes after their depositions or that the interrogators began including different leading questions in their scripts.

To the Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, your slave Ivashko Romanchiukov petitions. In this year 1658 on August 19, your sovereign decree was sent to me from the Military Chancellery … and I was ordered to question the people who were bewitched in Lukh: (*a long list of people bewitched in Lukh follows*).

Questioning of the bewitched townswomen

On July 17, 1658, by the sovereign's order … the bewitched townswomen of Lukh were questioned in the local administrative office before Ivan Savinovich Romanchiukov.

And in questioning Luka Frolov's wife, Ulitka, was asked: "what caused my illness, I don't know. In this year 1658 on Palm Sunday, I was attending the liturgy and at that time, it started to feel close all around me (*pochalos' byt toshno*), and I came home and it started to feel close there too, and I felt terror and the walls started to close in and to shake…. That terror lasted about six weeks, and after that the shrieking began. But who bewitched me, I don't know."

And that same day in questioning, the widow Arinka Obramevska said: "[In church] it started to feel close all around me and the aching began and shrieking in all sorts of voices." During questioning that misery seized her, and she cried out against Fedka and roared like a bear and barked like a dog. That misery overcomes her every day, sometimes twice or three times a day. "But who bewitched me, I don't know. And I never had arguments with anyone."

That same day in questioning, Taras Fedorov's wife, Ofrosinitsa, said: "In this year 1658 on St. Nicholas's Day in the spring, in the Church of the Resurrection of Christ, I was seized by chills and misery, and my heart started to ache. When I got home from church, that illness started up again at home, and I started to ache and lay as if dead. I have heard about this from what people say; I myself remember nothing. And who bewitched me, I don't know. I have no quarrels or enmity with anyone."

That same day in questioning, Kiriushka Tetiak's wife, Grunka, said … (*similar testimony*).

That same day in questioning, the widow Natalitsa, widow of Grigorei Prokhorov, said: "In this year during the Great Fast before Annunciation Day, I was eating Lenten fare with Priest Ivan Avramev, and when the evening was over, the misery set in…."

(*the name of the witness is missing*:) In this year on St. Egor's Day in the spring, in the Church of the Resurrection during the liturgy her illness began. It was as if she was covered in frost and it began to feel close all around her and she started to have the shakes and started to howl in voices, and "what caused it, I don't know."

That same day in questioning, Sertunka Tretiakov's wife, Fedorka, said … (*similar testimony*).

That same day in questioning, Petrunka Maslenik's wife, Orinka, said … (*similar testimony*).

That same day in questioning, Isachko's wife, Daritsa, said: "In this year, a week before St. Tikhon's Day, I was in the Church of the Resurrection during the liturgy, and at that time faintness overcame me and I fell to the ground senseless, and I shrieked with various voices, but I don't remember crying out against anyone in particular. That's what people say, but I don't remember. And who bewitched me, I don't know. I have had no quarrels or enmity with anyone. I feed myself in Christ's name (*that is, she is a beggar.*)" And during questioning that disease seized hold of her, but she didn't cry out against anyone.

That same day in questioning, Ivashko Ivanov's wife, Grunka, said: "In the past year 1658 on St. Nicholas's Day in the fall, I was in church for the

liturgy at the Church of the Resurrection, and at that time my bones began to ache, and I began to feel miserable and started to have chills. And when I got home, the aching and shrieking began again." She aches with that misery about twice a day, and during those fits, she bites people and gnaws at herself. During questioning that illness overcame her, "but who bewitched me, I don't know. I have no quarrels or enmity with anyone, and in that illness and bewitchment, I have never cried out against anyone."

That same day in questioning, Fedka Martynov's wife, Matrenka, said: "… (*the usual account*). And I have no quarrels or enmity with anyone because I am a widow and I don't go to feasts or visits anywhere." That widow wasn't brought for interrogation to the administrative office because she has a very severe case of that illness, so someone was sent to question her in her house.

That same day in questioning, Senka's wife, Matrenka, said: "This year on St. Nicholas's Day in the spring, I was at the Church of the Resurrection for the liturgy, and at that time I fell victim to chills and misery and my heart started to ache, and my bones, and arms…. I fell like one dead and started to shriek in voices…."

That same day in questioning, Grishka's wife, Okulka, said: "… (*the usual account*). I am a poor person. I feed myself in Christ's name…."

That same day in questioning, Loginko Fedorov's wife, Ovdotitsa, said: "I was at the cathedral church for prayers where the chapel is, and that misery found me. My heart began to ache so that I thought I would die, and how I got home, I don't remember." And that illness overcomes her rarely, once every two or three weeks, or once a month….

And on July 17 in questioning, Kazarko's wife, Manka, said: "On Bright Sunday, I was a guest at the home of the townsman Ivan Lukinov, when that misery found me … and I went from him with my aunt, Ondrei Khlebnikov's wife, to her house, and they took me senseless from my aunt's house…." In her illness she cries out against Erokha Vasilev (*this presumably is somehow connected to Ianka Erokhin*), or that's what people tell her, as she has no memory of it.

And, she said: "Erokha came to the house with my husband during that same period of Great Lent, … and my husband told me to bring him wine, but I didn't bring him the wine, and at that time, my towel went missing, and after that, I started to experience misery," and since then, she hasn't shrieked out any allegations or said a word [about it] since she left Ivan Lukinov's and they brought her from Ondrei Khlebnikov's house.

That same day in questioning, Ivashko Ievlev's wife, Marinka, said: "I was at the river and I came home from the river and the illness started … and in the illness I cry out against Fedka Vasilev and against Tereshka. That's what people say; I don't have any memory of it." … And during questioning the illness started, and she said: "Fedka Vasilev wears a cross under his heel, and he found out about [this accusation?] and ran away." And she started to accuse Fedka and Tereshka even while not suffering from affliction, ever since St. Nicholas's Day of the fall of this year.

Questioning of the men of Lukh

July 17, 1658, in questioning, the townsman Fedka Martynov said his wife and his daughter-in-law are bewitched, and in their bewitchment they don't speak out against anyone, "but about Tereshka, I am of the opinion that he has many incantations (*sheptiia*) and he casts spells (*nagovarivaet*)."

On that same day Petrunka Maslennikov said in questioning:

> I am of the opinion that Tereshka said spells and healed Fedor Popov's daughter-in-law Tatiana from bewitchment, when she was bewitched originally, and he took a ruble for that. And when they put Tereshka in prison, he sent that ruble back to Fedor. And he treated the wife of Priest Matvei from bewitchment too and took a ruble from him. And Tereshka's own brother Petrunka said about him on numerous occasions that many (*illegible*) come to him for incantations and come to him for healing. And in the presence of Mikhail Skriabin, some grasses or plants were taken from Tereshka, pulled from his shirt (*lit. bosom*). But when the bewitchment starts, the wives say nothing against him.

Luka Frolov in questioning said: "My wife cries out in her sickness in various voices, and in her illness she cries out, mentioning only 'the master (*master*)' and 'surety guarantor (*poruchik*),' but she doesn't name any names. Tereshka has incantations, and I accuse Ianka Salautin because I had

a service contract with him and (*illegible*), but his own brother Mitka was the surety guarantor."

Kiriushka Tretiakov said in questioning: "My wife cries out in her illness, and she says 'Ivan,' but who this Ivan is, I don't know. But when I got married, someone, I don't know who, bewitched me, and rendered me impotent, and Arkhipko Fadeev cured me of that illness, and he admitted to this in the administrative office before Governor Grigorei Koisarov."

Senka Belianin said in questioning: "my wife shrieks in her illness, but she doesn't cry out against anyone in particular as responsible for the bewitchment." He is a simple person, doesn't go anywhere to socialize with people or go to feasts, and he doesn't know anything about Igoshka or the others.

Isachko Sidorov said in questioning: "My wife cries out in bewitchment but she doesn't name names. And I don't know who bewitched her…."

Ivashko Ievlev said in questioning: "My wife is bewitched and in her bewitchment she shrieks out in various animal voices, and she mentions Fedka Vasilev and says that he wears a cross under his heel. And that Fedka left, having found out that [he had been named as a suspect]. Igoshka and the others are sitting in jail…."

Stenka Kipreianov said in questioning:

> My daughter (*Manka*) is bewitched, and in her bewitchment she shrieks and names the name "Tereshka," and "Erokhin" is the other name she mentions…. In 1657/58, my daughter said Prince Ivan Fedorovich Khvorostinin's landless peasant (*bobyl'*) Ianka Erofeev came with her husband, that is, with my son-in-law, to my little house…. Ianka is a minstrel (s*komorokh*). And her husband told her to bring him some wine, but my daughter did not bring him wine. And she said: "You know my dad (*bat'ka*) doesn't like minstrels," and she didn't bring him the wine. And at that time, her scarf (*plat*) disappeared, and because of that, I am speaking out against Ianka Erofeev, and he and Tereshka are rogues (*pluty*)….

8.3 A HEALER ACCUSED OF DABBLING IN WITCHCRAFT AND EXORCISING

DEMONS (PLC, 1710)

Source: TsDIAK Ukrainy, f. 35 (Kovel'), op. 1, spr. 13 (1704–12), ark. 234–36. Translated from Polish by Kateryna Dysa. We are grateful to Dysa for also sharing her transcription of the archival document with us.

The case below suggests that demonic possession was well known in the town of Kowel/Kovel in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth's Palatinate of Volhynia at the turn of the eighteenth century. However, it lacks much of the drama that characterized possession in the Russian Orthodox lands, or for that matter in the Roman Catholic and Protestant regions to the west. Demonic possession, which was nevertheless still terrifying, seems to have struck men and women in equal measure in the following case. It was marked by fever and sleeplessness that sometimes could be fatal. The trial record provides a glimpse of popular remedies for possession. Reliance on uncanonical folk healing for the condition was so widespread that even a priest's wife turned to it to aid her afflicted husband, as acknowledged in her testimony below. Here the healer Hrehory Kozłowski/Kozlovskyi was acquitted of the charges of dabbling in witchcraft and exorcising demons, although the church penances, hefty fines, and threats of further sanctions should he conduct any more of his healings suggest that he was not above suspicion. Although there is no evidence that he said prayers of exorcism, a few of his practices do intimate skills associated with both exorcism and the neutralizing of sorcerers' powers, practices that Hrehory said that he had learned from a man who had once healed him of the bedeviling fever. There is some contradiction in the case report here, as the investigative summary indicates that Hrehory learned the healing rituals from his father. It is not clear if a scribe made the error or if Hrehory contradicted himself. Nonetheless, one of the practices entails fumigation and a ceramic pot. Descriptions in other sources indicate that a substance of some sort, probably charcoal, was burned in either a metal pan or ceramic pot and placed initially under the ill person's head to drive away the illness or demons. Then it would have been passed over the body. The practice appears to be similar to the one described by Prince Andrei Kurbskii in his sixteenth-century *History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* (see the second of the documents in 2.9). Coincidentally (or not), Prince Kurbskii had title to the Castle of Kowel, located in the town where this case takes place.

Although not exactly the same, this lay practice of fumigation borrowed aspects from Uniate Orthodox rites involving the officiating priest's swinging of a censer full of burning incense to bless both holy objects and people and to represent the prayers of saints and worshippers rising toward heaven. The censer was and is still used also during the reading of elaborate prayers of exorcism. The combination of the holy object and prayers is believed to stir the demons' anger and fear and to drive them away. The Orthodox sacrament of baptism involves a variety of rituals to drive out evil spirits. Once the baptism and anointing of holy oil have taken place, the officiating priest will proceed with the tonsuring, which involves cutting four locks from the infant's head—front, back, and

over each ear—to make the outline of a cross. The donation of hair symbolizes the newly baptized person's entry into the church and firm allegiance to Christ. The healer Hrehory's "tonsuring" of his patients and placement of their precious hair in holes in doorframes plugged with aspen pegs (aspen being the type of tree on which Judas hung himself) represented popular attempts to drive away demons from the afflicted. Finally, the symbolism of gold from a coin, which Hrehory used either to stuff in similar holes or to add to a magical potion, evoked another popular counterdemonic measure.[13]

Investigation and testimonies

An investigation of the honorable Hrehory Kozłowski took place in the town court of Kowel:

> The first witness, the honorable Teodorowa Znoiewska/Teodorova Znoevska testified: "In 1706, I was struck ill with demonic possession because of God's will and sought out God's help and that of mere mortals. Accordingly, my late husband persistently begged the honorable Hrehory Kozłowski to save me from my illness. Kozłowski fumigated me, after which I fell asleep, but the next day I was still ill. And I was taken to the cathedral for prayers and then, praise be to God, I became healthy and remain so, God permitting, for a long time. Besides that, I do not remember what happened to me."

The second witness, Ian Znoiewski, her son, testified: "My late father and Hrehory were sitting near the house, when Hrehory said to him: 'I have to cut a pure gold coin in two and insert it into the doorframe.' My late father gave him such a coin, after which he went into the house and locked himself inside. I don't know what he did there, but a nail was banged into the doorframe. I don't know any more and I am ready to swear to this."

The third witness, the honorable Michał Męleszkiewicz/Mykhailo Meleshkevych, testified: "My sister was ill and did not sleep for several days. I went to Hrehory and asked him to be compassionate and to help my sister. Hrehory came and asked whether she had slept or not, and I answered that she had not. He replied: 'Don't worry, she'll sleep.' And she fell asleep after he fumigated her and then tied her hands together with a thin rope. And we did not make any payment for that service."

The fourth witness, the honorable Szymon Skarski/Shymon Skarskyi, testified: "My wife was ill and could not sleep for several days. And then Hrehory came with Michał, fumigated her with what substance I don't

know. He then drilled a hole in the doorframe in the inner porch, filled it, and left. And my wife fell asleep after that."

The fifth witness,Wedenowska/Vedenovska, the priest's wife, testified: "My late master (*i.e., husband*) was struck with demonic possession because of God's will and could not sleep for several days. We sought various remedies. And I myself invited Hrehory. He came to the house and told me to give him a new earthen pot and to leave the house. And I don't know what he did there. However, the now-deceased was still ill. Hrehory did not help him in any way."

The sixth witness, the honorable Teodor Andrzeiowicz/Andriyovych, testified: "I went to Hrehory with my master's wife, Wedenowska, asking him to help the master. He came to the house, immediately drilled a hole above the door frame, and filled it with a peg. Then he fumigated the master with what I do not know and tied his hands and feet together with a thin rope. He hung something round his neck, cut some of his hair, and took it with him. But still the man remained feverish. Hrehory couldn't help him."

The seventh set of witnesses: The honorable jurymen of the town court were dispatched to search for drilled holes above doors in the houses mentioned in the investigation. They included Masters Włas Gniewski/Vlas Gnevskyi, Aleksandr Podhorski/Podhorskyi, and Jozef Semenowicz/Iosyp Semenovych, who noted in their report that in the widow Znoiewska's house they saw a drilled hole above the door plugged with an aspen peg. Similarly, in Wedenowska's house there was a pegged hole and one in the right doorframe of Szymon Skarski's inner porch. The report was duly accepted and recorded in Kowel's town records.

Report of March 1, 1710

In the presence of Michał łuckiewicz/Mykhailo Vutskevych, a three-month member of the magistracy; Daniel Jackowicz/Danylo Iatskovych, a temporary replacement for the guild master, the honorable Tomasz Stefanowicz/Tomas Stefanovych; council members Iacenty Teodorowicz/Iatsenty Teodorovych; Teodor Żukowicz/Zhukovych; jurors Włas Gniewski, Alexandr Podhorski, Jozef Semenowicz, Szymon

Pawłowicz/Shymon Pavlovych, and under the authority of His Majesty's town of Kowel:

On the basis of the investigations conducted in the presence of the above-mentioned people in regard to the accused Hrehory Kozłowski, who was charged before the castle authorities with dabbling in witchcraft and driving demons out of people, the castle court demanded justice. At the appointed time, the accused came before the court and defended himself as follows:

> When I was living with my parents, I once came down with a fever. My father was successful in finding a person who could help me. This man took a potion made of wormwood root over which a spell had been said and scraped some gold into it. He rubbed that mixture on me and fumigated me with that concoction. He then lubricated me again with the same potion and tied my hands and feet with a thin twisted linen rope. He also cut my nails and cut bits of hair from four different parts of my head. Then he drilled a hole in the doorframe, put the hair and nails in the hole, and pegged it. My fever passed because of what he did. My father told me: "It was God who saved you from the illness, but remember that charmed potion." And that is why I used the charmed potion on other people once or twice. But I know nothing about exorcising the devil and am not aware of any exorcisms. And I don't know any other types of sorcery. Let God save me from them; I don't want to learn them.

Having heard both sides of the matter and in compliance with the law, the court rules: The accused was charged in the castle's court with indulging in witchcraft and exorcising demons. However the witnesses, the investigation, and the jurors' report did not prove these things. Three times the accused swore an oath that he had no knowledge of witchcraft and did not know how to exorcise demons from people. He readily admitted to the court that he had conducted a fumigation ritual with an enchanted potion and drilled holes, saying that his father had taught him this skill. For this offense the accused has to lie prostrate in the form of a cross during services in Kowel's church for three months. He also has to do the same in the cathedral for the duration of two liturgies. Also, he has to donate a quarter-stone (*three and a half pounds*) of wax to Kowel's church and another quarter-stone to the cathedral. (*Wax would have been used to make candles.*) In the event that he ever again uses those charmed concoctions, fumigates people, and drills holes, he will have to pay fifty *hryvnas* to the

castle and town authorities; he will also be outlawed from the town community.

8.4 AN EPIDEMIC OF SHRIEKING AND WRITHING IN A VILLAGE DESTABILIZED BY MANUMISSION (1833)

Source: GAVO, f. 175, op. 2, d. 6, ll. 4–4 ob., 6–6 ob., 10–12, 16–19, 28, 30–31 ob.

The following epidemic of demonic possession affected two serf estates in Vologda Province, belonging to two different landowners—Nikolai Ivanov Sablin and one Kandalintsev (name and patronymic were not provided). The Sablin family traced it roots back to the late sixteenth century, although the Sablins' estates in Vologda Province were fairly modest. The Kandalintsevs first attained noble status near the end of the eighteenth century. Among the twelve victims of bewitchment were a gentry woman identified only as Kandalintsev's daughter-in-law, three manumitted female serfs, and one elderly male serf; the rest were female serfs. In the eighteenth century noblewomen sometimes appeared as demoniacs, but by the nineteenth century that occurrence had become rare, at least in the extant written record, and elite women exhibiting characteristics of demonic possession were increasingly identified by medical practitioners as suffering from hysteria rather than possession. Their symptoms eventually shifted from the shrieking and convulsions associated with *klikushestvo* to the supposedly more scientific "hysterical" ones of shortness of breath, irritability, nervousness, and theatricality. The presence of a gentry woman among the demoniacs of the village Chepsara serves as a reminder that the cultural divide between the elite and peasants was never absolute. Gentry and peasant cultures on Russian provincial estates continued to share beliefs and experiences.

At the same time, it would appear that social anxiety plagued Chepsara. Sablin's manumission of some of his serfs—after an 1803 law made the freeing of serfs possible—meant that he not only relinquished his and his heirs' authority over them but also any responsibility for them. As the historian Alison Smith has recently pointed out, a serf woman might have been freed either with her family or as a single individual. In the latter case, she may have received a note granting her the right to marry whomever she wished. However, manumission did not necessarily come with the serf's agreement to her new status or her ability to look after her or her family's needs. Many manumitted serfs were elderly and unable to look after themselves. Losing the economic and social stability of working in their lord's household or in their village society could have devastating

results. Matters were different in cases in which serfs had sufficient resources and were able to convince their owners to free them for a significant sum of money. We have very little in the way of clues about the situation confronting the manumitted serfs in this case, but the very act of manumission might have destabilized village relationships. The emancipated individuals would have depended on their neighbors' largesse until they were able to gain membership in other social communities or became vagrants.[14] Witchcraft or the malevolence of others could help explain such community destabilization to those most closely affected.

The characteristics of demonic possession in this case fit the phenomenon's dramatic script of seizures occurring in church and in the presence of the alleged witches. The male victim of possession notes that he traveled to two monasteries to seek help for his affliction. Given the spiritual nature of demonic possession, he would have been treated by monks and nuns with remedies involving prayers of exorcism, the application of holy oil and holy water, and the partaking of holy communion.

The authorities involved in resolving the situation uniformly adopted a skeptical position. Fortunately, the doctor consulted in the case confined his examination to the nature of the common substances that had been identified as having bewitching properties after incantations had been whispered over them. He refrained from the kinds of invasive or violent "treatments" recommended by some other physicians at the time (see Document 4.10). To the officials in the court of equity, his findings supported the legal presumption that magic was impossible and had to be fraudulent. They provide no record of what led them to conclude that it was the supposed witches rather than the supposed possessed who had committed the deception.

Declaration of the Vologda landowner, the staff captain Nikolai Ivanov Sablin

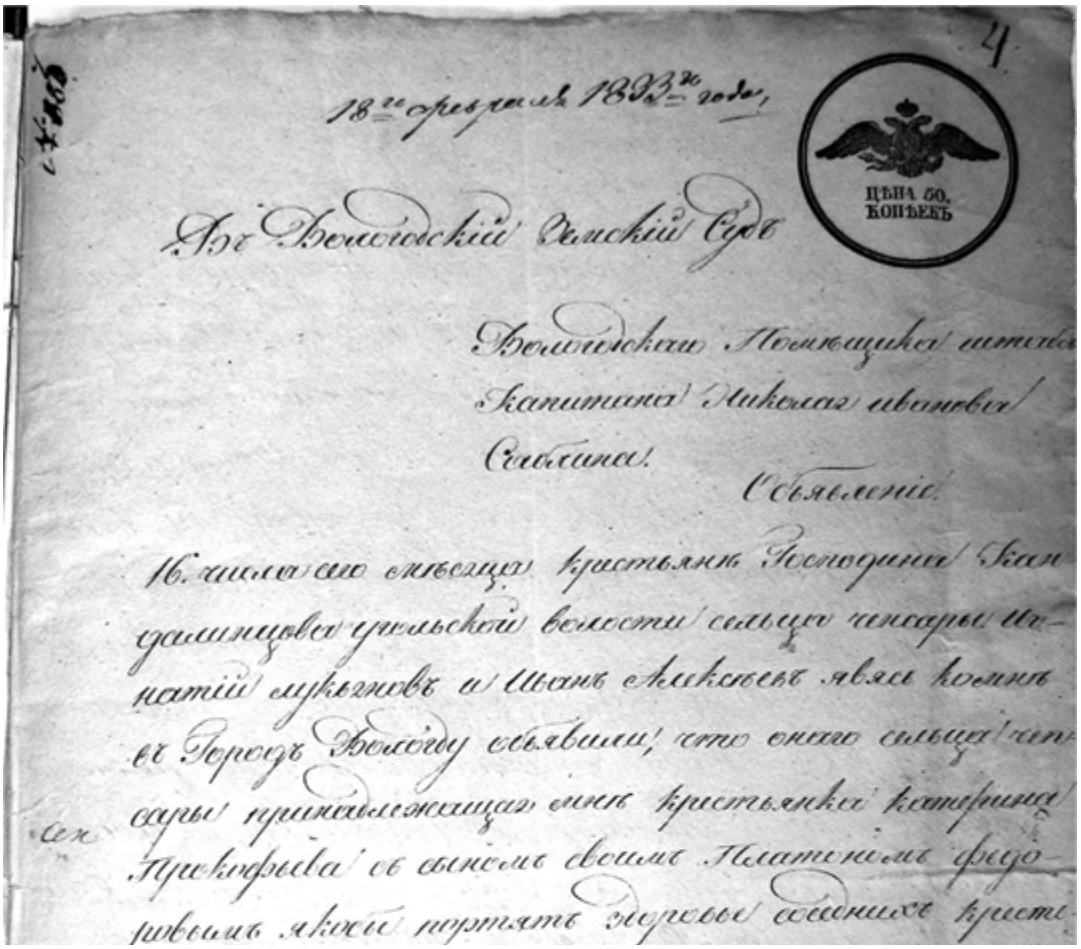
On the sixteenth of this month, February 1833, Ignatii Lukianov and Ivan Alekseev, peasants belonging to the landowner Kandalintsov of the village Chepsara, Usolsk Volost, appeared before me in the city of Vologda to inform me that the peasant woman Katerina Prokofeva and her son Platon Fedorov, who belong to me and come from that same village Chepsara, are bewitching healthy neighboring peasant women. That is why I dispatched my household servant Flegont Ivanov, who lives on my mother's estate in the village Kazanskoe, Toshinsk Volost, with the order that he gather the village elder of that place and my peasants, invite Nobleman Kandalintsov to join us, and carry out a rigorous investigation and report back to me.

The investigation was carried out but nothing suspicious was found except some roots, which I thought were ginger roots, and, according to the residents, some kind of concoction as well.

To calm the neighboring peasants and to prevent any untoward event that might result because of the neighbors' animosity toward the accused, I am placing this peasant woman and her son under arrest with the apprehended items so that they can be dealt with according to the law and according to the degree of their guilt.

Testimonies before the Vologda land court on February 20, 1833

The sixty-seven-year-old illiterate Katerina Prokofeva denied spoiling her neighbors' health; she has never had an inclination to do so. Lukianov's daughter-in-law Natalia and Alekseev's niece Sekletia are ill, but she, Prokofeva, had nothing to do with it. As for the roots, her daughter-in-law Klavdeia Lvova sent them to her to treat her sister Domna Prokofeva's eyes.



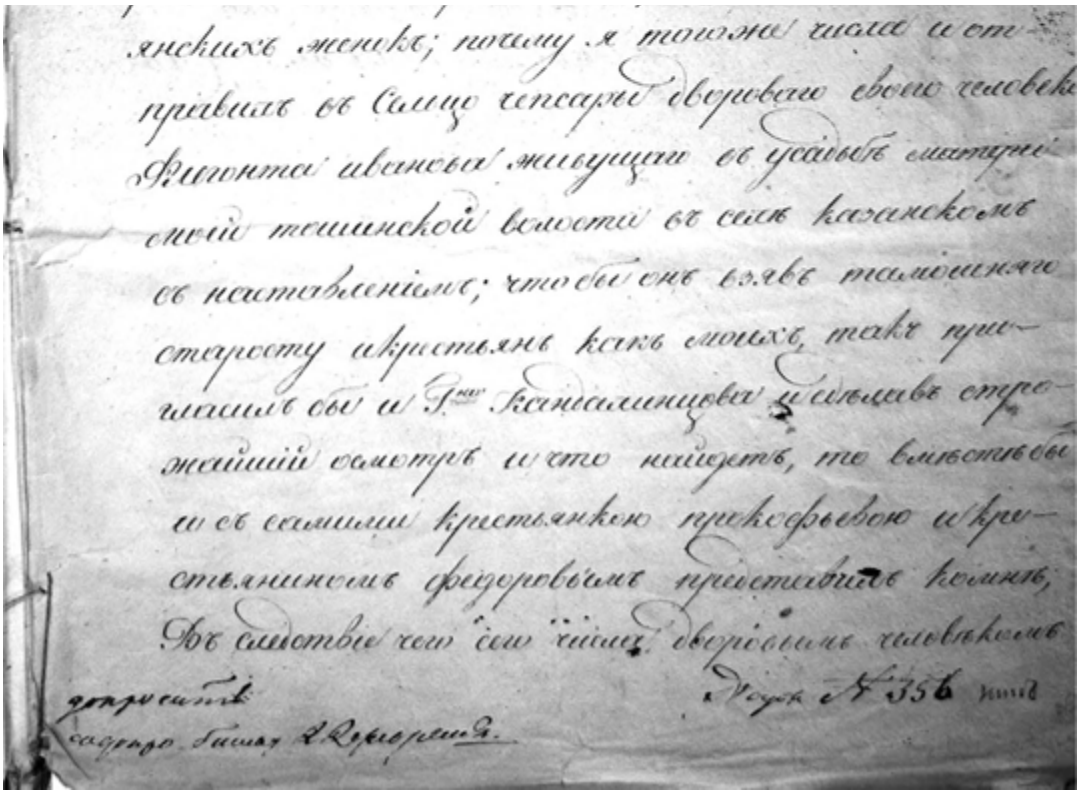


Figure 9: Staff Captain Nikolai Ivanov Sablin's declaration to the Vologda land court, extract, February 18, 1833, about the investigation into the charge against his serfs, the peasant woman Katerina Prokofeva and her son Platon Fedorov, for bewitching people. Since this was official business, Sablin had to use government stamped paper or risk a fine. The Romanov doubleheaded eagle is portrayed on the stamp as is the cost of 50 kopecks. We thank Alison Smith for sharing her insights on the stamped paper with us. GAVO, f. 175, op. 2, d. 6, l. 4. Courtesy of GAVO.

Her son, the twenty-eight-year-old illiterate, unmarried, and childless Platon Fedorov, denied spoiling his neighbors' health using similar language but pointed out that Ignatii Lukianov and Ivan Alekseev are angry at him and his family because of a quarrel over the fall mowing of the lowlands.

Testimonies before the Vologda land court on March 13, 1833, in response to the noble representative Belev's questions

1. The fifty-three-year-old illiterate Ignatii Lukianov accused Katerina Prokopeva and her son Platon Fedorov of bewitching the manumitted peasant girls Afimia Alekseeva, Maria Vasileva, and Maremiana Ivanova (who formerly belonged to Nobleman Sablin), Nobleman Sablin's serf women Maria Ivanova, Marfa Ivanova, and Natalia Karpova and Nobleman Kandalintsov's women, including his daughter-in-law Natalia Egorova, Feoktista Maksimova, Marfa Sidorova,

and Anna Iznateva, and Petr Alekseev. Of these, Afimia Alekseeva, Maria Vasileva, as well as Maria and Marfa Ivanova, when the illness attacks them, say that the accused identified above bewitched them. The accused carry with them various items such as sand and hair in a bundle and throw threads. Lukianov refers to the ill women as shriekers (*klikushi*).

2. The forty-eight-year-old illiterate Ivan Alekseev agreed with Lukianov, adding that when the women see Katerina Prokopeva and her son Platon, they immediately begin to writhe and say that they bewitched them.

March 14 testimonies of the villagers of Chepsara by the Vologda land court nobleman's representative Belev

1. Twenty-five-year-old illiterate Semen Nikolaev … noted that they are all afraid of going out on the street and that they can't feel safe if these people are not removed from the village.

2. The twenty-five-year-old Petr Petrov (*agreed with Nikolaev's testimony*).

3. The sixty-year-old Petr Alekseev added that this year before Butter Week, Katerina Prokofeva served him something to drink and that since that time he has been unwell, which is why he went on a pilgrimage to the Kirillo-Novoezerskii Monastery and the Goritskii Resurrection women's Monastery (*in Vologda Province*), after which his health improved a bit, but he still feels ill.

(A total of ten men were questioned that day; some of them had female relatives who had been bewitched.)

Belev took twenty-four depositions from peasants living outside of Chepsara

Martyn Fedorov of the village Molodok, which belongs to the estate of Ivan Ikonnikov, said that in the neighboring village of Chepsara there are many girls and women who are bewitched and who during church services writhe and shout awful things. Many of them say at that time that Nobleman Sablin's peasant widow Katerina Prokopeva and her son Platon Fedorov bewitched them, but he doesn't know for sure if they bewitched them; no other suspicion against them exists other than the rumor that they bewitched these people. (*All the others agreed with this statement.*)

The volost medical office's report of April 24, 1833

On April 13, the doctor was given some roots, hair, threads with some charcoal, and some sort of grass. The root is white ginger, the hair is human, the charcoal is made from wood, and it is impossible to know the type of grass as there is so little of it and it is crumpled. With the exception of the grass, none of it could have done harm.

The case before Vologda's court of equity

On April 26, 1833, by order of His Imperial Majesty, the court of equity examined the case that last March 28 came before the Vologda land court regarding Nikolai Sablin's serfs Platon Fedorov and Katerina Prokopeva, who are suspected of bewitching peasant women and girls. Moreover, the land court dispatched Fedorov and Prokopeva together with roots of ginger, some hair with threads, needles, and some kind of grass to us. It is significant in this case that the peasants belonging to the serfowner Kandalintsov, Ignatii Lukianov and Ivan Alekseev, testified before the assessor Belev and said just what the bewitched had themselves shrieked: that is, that their neighbor, the serfowner Sablin's peasant woman Katerina Prokopeva, together with her son Platon Fedorov, bewitched the peasant girls Afimia Semenova, Maria Vasileva, and others manumitted by Nobleman Sablin. When they have a seizure, four of them say that Prokopeva and her son Platon bewitched them and that the accused must have used divination to identify the people they would bewitch. This is why they (*the possessed and accusers*) asked Nobleman Sablin either to rebuke Prokopeva and her son or to ban them from the village, as well as to penalize them with heavy fines. Otherwise they will constantly find bundles of things such as sand, salt, hair, charcoal, and threads thrown about for the purpose of bewitchment. The peasants Semen Nikolaev and his friends (*tovarishchi*) testified that the bewitched women claimed that Prokopeva and her son Platon had bewitched them and that similar magical bundles had been scattered, but they failed to mention for whom the bundles were meant and where they were thrown.

Taking appropriate steps, the investigator ordered that the defendants Prokopeva and her son be brought before the bewitched persons. As soon as the latter saw them, their faces changed, they fell to the ground shouting, and they began to writhe. Four of them shouted that Prokofeva and her son

had bewitched them and proceeded to attack Prokopeva and her son after one of the girls shouted when the bewitchment had taken place. It took several men to prevent them from going mad. The plaintiffs said that Prokopeva and her son had bewitched them and thrown heavy thread at them, saying some incantation at the time when they bewitched them. After that, the bewitched reported that they were feeling better that day and no longer writhed. But the defendants, whether in the questioning in the land court or in response to the priest's admonition, did not admit their guilt, testifying [instead] that they never took part in any bewitchment. As for the ginger roots found in Prokopeva's home, she explained that her daughter-in-law Klavdia Lvova had sent them to her to treat eye ailments. In the general investigation, a total of twenty-four individuals testified that many girls and women were genuinely bewitched. During the singing of church hymns they screamed and writhed in a frightening fashion, and many of them at that time said that Prokopeva and her son Platon had bewitched them, but Prokopeva and her son say that they don't know how to bewitch people, and they don't have any reason other than the testimonies of the bewitched to suspect them of witchcraft. The medical department, upon this court's request, made it known that according to its investigation it found a root of white ginger, human hair, charcoal, and a very small amount of grass, which because it is all crumpled, cannot be identified.

The verdict

In order to decide whether or not they were used for fraudulent purposes more than as an attempt to carry out malevolence against someone, in chapter 5, article 10 [of the Military Statute], regarding God's will, and chapter 26, article[s 397] and 399 of the Statute of Provincial Administration (*see the first document in 3.19)*, it is written that cases concerning such criminals … be sent to the court of equity, which has the sole right to make a decision…. Before an assembly of people from settlements near their residence fifteen lashes of the birch rod are to be applied to Prokopeva and twenty-five to her son for having committed fraud…. Then they will be bound by their signatures to refrain henceforth

from such actions. The hair with the charcoal and threads, the ginger root and grasses are to be returned to the Vologda land court….

Dated April 22, 1833

8.5 FITS OF HICCUPING (1833)

Source: GAVO, f. 175, op. 2, d. 7 (1833), ll. 48, 49–51 ob.

The trial below stems from an epidemic of *ikota* or severe and persistent hiccuping that unfolded in 1833 in a community of unfree crown peasants, that is, peasants who worked on lands owned by the royal family. The drama unfolded in the villages of Upper and Lower Verkhototemsk in Solvychegodsk District in Vologda Province, and the case was heard by the court of equity in the provincial capital. Community members identified four men and one woman as sorcerers and claimed that they were responsible for causing the outbreak. The case record gives a poignant snapshot of life at the margins, and the vulnerability of the poorest members of the community: four of the accused perpetrators are described as being desperately poor, barely subsisting at the fringes of society.

As in the 1839 epidemic of demonic possession in an Urals foundry town (see Document 4.10), the Vologda court sought a doctor's opinion on the nature of the affliction. Once again, we see the medicalization and feminization of demoniacs as women suffering from hysteria, even though there were men among the victims. The physician in this case imposes a supposedly scientific, external "commonsense" opinion onto a complex system of beliefs about possession. He trivializes the symptoms as "imaginary bewitchment," and ascribes them to purportedly inherent weaknesses of female physiology. Further, he dismisses the possibility of treating the victims, noting somewhat heartlessly that the fleeting symptoms are not injurious to their health. At least this meant that he did not subject the victims of possession to any public humiliation, in contrast to what happened in the Urals case several years later.

The Vologda Court's assessment of the previous investigation's evidence

Having been transferred from the Solvychegodsk land court, the following case came before the Vologda court of equity on July 17, 1833. Verkhototemsk crown peasants of the Solvychegodsk region Stepan Khrushkikh, Abram Feofilatev, Andrei Kopalin, Mikhail Strezhnev, and Paraskovia Kopalina stood accused of allegedly unleashing hiccups on people or turning them into so-called shriekers….

Paraskovia Kopalina testified that Anna Chudakov and four other people had accused her of bewitching them, but not only was she unable to bewitch these people, she doesn't even know any of them. However, she did not have character witnesses to vindicate her.

Mikhail Strezhnev testified that the accusations of the peasants Timofei and Anna Maletina, Pavel Semnov, and Afimia Borovykh that he had allegedly bewitched them and brought hiccups upon them were completely unjustifiable. In his defense he pointed to the peasant Ivan Shumovskii and gave the names of six others as character witnesses but could not provide further proof of his innocence. Strezhnev said that he never had any herbs or other items that caused people harm.

However, the peasants Vasilii Dolinin and others testified under oath that they have heard through rumor that Strezhnev unleashes bewitchment, otherwise known as an epidemic of hiccuping, on people, but they cannot affirm whether this is really the case. As for Strezhnev's character, they don't know if the peasant Timofei Meletin and three other persons are ill because of Strezhnev. He has a bad reputation: he is lazy and has no enthusiasm for managing his household or farming. According to rumors, he dabbles in sorcery, but they can't name anyone who has seen him plying it.

Stepan Khrushkikh was sentenced with the birch rod at the crown office for having escaped his guard. Under oath, Maksim Khrushkikh and four other people testified that as Stepan's neighbors they had heard rumors that he bewitches people by bringing hiccups on them, but they can't really prove this. They don't know if Tatiana Gracheva and the four others are ill because of him. He has a bad reputation: he tends to be lazy, is indifferent to running his household and farming. According to rumors, he dabbles in sorcery but they don't know if anyone saw him do anything untoward.

Avram Feofilatev testified that Paraskovia Klepikova and two others claimed that he inflicted hiccups and bewitchment upon them. His neighbors Vlas Feofilatev and four companions (*tovarishchi*) said under oath that according to rumors he bewitches people by afflicting them with hiccups, but they can't prove this. They don't know if the woman Paraskovia Klepikova and the other two are ill because of him. He has a bad

reputation: they have seen him frequently drunk; he is lazy and indifferent to managing a household and farming.

Twenty-four men as well another thirty-six men testified under oath that the peasant Filipp Lapov and his wife Anna Chudakova have good reputations and that they hadn't heard anything about their having improper relationships with other people. The men testified that they heard about the bewitchments by way of rumors, while twenty-four men from Lower Verkhototemsk said that they also approved of the behavior and relationships of the woman Tatiana Dragunova and three others and that they learned of the bewitchments through rumors.

Investigation on the scene

A search of the households of the defendants Stepan Khrushkikh, Avram Feofilatev, and Mikhailo Strezhnev uncovered several grasses in linen bundles and wood bark ground into a fine powder. According to the staff doctor Lisenko, these items are not dangerous to humans. Nothing comparable was found in Vasilii Kopalin's home, but he has disappeared. The widow Paraskovia Kopalina lives in a nearby small, unheated barn. This home has totally collapsed; not only is it uninhabitable, but it is also dangerous. The barn's roof has collapsed from age, and it has no floor. The investigation did not find any grasses or anything harmful to people in it. It was remarkable, however, that all of the domestic crockery was in poor and smelly condition from various types of dirt. Because she (Kopalina) doesn't have a stable dwelling, people think that she pursues witchcraft to harm others. The homes of Stepan Khrushkikh, Avram Feofilatev, and Mikhail Strezhnev were also found in the highest state of disorder.

Doctor's report

In his deposition the staff physician Lisenko wrote that when he was at the locality with the land policeman and scrivener he diagnosed the illness he witnessed as hysterical fits, which are characteristic of the female sex and occur because of a disorder in their weak organism. The individuals suffering from the imaginary bewitchment were beset by hysterical fits rather than bewitchment or hiccups released upon them by means of

sorcery. Rather than being shriekers or possessed, they had fits characteristic of and in conformity with hysteria. These people initially feel a slight chill; then they become sad, melancholic, sorrowful, and finally they begin to yawn, hiccup and cry, and laugh and guffaw loudly, after which they experience convulsions, extended stomachs and growling in that organ, as if some sort of mass is moving about in the stomach and rises to the throat and squeezes the throat to cause asphyxiation. Then their faces turn dark red and their eyes widen. Such fits can be brought on by an unexpected event, anger, vexation, a chill, idle nonsense in the conduct of life, and finally, anxieties. This illness is characterized by sadness, boredom, sometimes acts of deviance and repentance, malevolence, envy—in a word, tormenting passions that weaken them, causing asthenia. They are highly susceptible to irritability and are unable to counter bad impressions. All these characteristics are intensified by the physical nature of their sex: difficult births, premature deliveries, masturbation, frequent intercourse, as well as menstrual flows with mucous and heavy bleeding. All of this makes them weak and powerless and promotes a type of illness wherein the seizures come and go periodically without any harm to their health whatsoever, which means that they do not require assistance to recover from it.

Verdict

On July 24, 1833, after examination of the case, the following was decided in the Vologda court of equity.

1. Although a significant number of people testified that the woman Kopalina and the male peasants Khrushkikh, Feofilatev, and Strezhnev commit malevolent acts by bewitching people and unleashing hiccups, [the accused] did not admit to doing so in the land official's and court attorney's examinations or in response to the priest's admonition. People in the area testified that they know about these things only by way of rumor. And the staff doctor described all the circumstances leading to the illnesses and explained that these so-called bewitched people were afflicted with hysterical fits, and not bewitchment or possession whereby magic released hiccups upon them. He said that the grasses ground into fine powder and

wood bark are not dangerous and suggested that the peasants' views result from ignorance and stupidity. Accordingly, this case, by the authority of the Military Statute, part 2, chapter 5, article 10, is to be given over to God's will. Until that time when that will is expressed, the accused are to be lashed for their fraudulent use of the discovered grasses and wood bark and their perjurious testimonies before the court by the authority of the February 5, 1784, decree and [Statute of Provincial] Administration, chapter 26, articles 397 and 399 (*see the first document in 3.19*) before an assembly at the volost administration. The woman is to be given fifteen lashes, and each of the three peasants twenty lashes of the birch rod, after which they are obliged in writing to desist henceforth from such actions and are to be returned to their estate.

2. Although the peasants of Upper and Lower Verkhototemsk want the four peasants exiled, this court does not have such authority; since this matter should be left to the appropriate body, the court suggests to the Solvychegodsk land court that it take the matter up with the provincial administration.

3. The case and rulings are to be brought to the governor's attention for his approval.

Chapter 9

SATANIC PACTS/DIABOLISM

The satanic pact, the voluntary decision to sell one's soul to the devil, emerged as an important plank in European witch lore in the early modern period. The trope of the satanic pact dates back to the early Middle Ages, and was generally associated with some kind of tit-for-tat: a sinful human would exchange his soul—and in the earliest versions it is usually a man entering such a deal—for money, career advancement, knowledge, power, or sexual favors. In the early modern period, the pact was increasingly understood as the basis for magic: otherwise, how could one explain any mortal being's ability to subvert the natural order? When poor, uneducated old women wielded such unearthly power, the situation required still more explanation. The idea of a satanic pact provided early modern demonologists with the causal mechanism they wanted. Fueled by invidious notions about female bodies and minds, demonologists adumbrated ideas about how women were driven by envy, greed, and insatiable lust to turn to demons to satisfy their desires. However, since they were entering the quintessential "devil's bargain," the misguided women would find the devil's seed was cold and his sexual performance disappointing. The food he offered was tasteless, and the money he gave them would turn to grass or leaves in the morning.

This elaborate demonology, however eagerly debated in the Catholic and Protestant world, made few inroads in the Orthodox sphere. Legends of male pacts with the devil circulated in Byzantium as well as in the medieval West, and some of these stories crossed over into the Slavic Orthodox world, but, as the historian Russell Zguta pointed out in his important 1977 article on seventeenth-century Russian witch trials, they never rose to the fore in trials of witches in Russia as they did in the West.[1] Building on his observations, subsequent scholarship has confirmed that this finding held true both in the Russian and in the Ukrainian lands and continued through the eighteenth century. In this world of the Eastern Slavs, a connection between witches' powers and the devil's aid was not considered necessary as an explanation of the efficacy of magic.

This is not to pretend that the devil and his lesser demons stayed out of ideas about witchcraft entirely. Prince Andrei Kurbskii (or whoever composed the *History of the Grand Prince of Moscow* that is associated with him) presented a clear-cut association between workable magic and satanic pact. He wrote, "as is known to all people, there are no spells without denial of God and without agreement with the devil" (see the second document in 2.9). Kurbskii's position, however, is quite anomalous in Russian writings and may reflect the influence of his Polish-Lithuanian hosts, who participated in a Catholic and Protestant cultural world where the pact had far greater currency. The notion that magic derived from such an agreement was formulated in Russian law for the first time under Peter the Great (see the first document in 3.13). Peter's statutes put this understanding of witchcraft into circulation as a fully articulated legal concept and may have unintentionally inspired the slight growth in such cases in the eighteenth century. It never, however, took off as a major component of Russian witchcraft belief or practice.

Occasionally we do find references to pacts, not only in the ruminations of churchmen or the leading questions of interrogators, but also in practice. A few records of actual pacts, unimpeachable material artifacts, survive. We provide several such cases below. They can be unnerving to read, but bear in mind that they remained rare in Russian witch trials even after the formal

legal introduction of the concept in Peter's Military Statute. They were perhaps even rarer in Ukrainian witch trials.

Satan and his minions entered into belief and practice in other ways as well. Magical spells addressed to the devil by variants of his name crop up not infrequently in the historical record. In particular, spells to attract partners to illicit sex often drew on satanic forces. For this reason, the cases included in this chapter could equally well be categorized in the chapter on love and sex, but because the comparison with the more familiar European model of satanic witchcraft is so intriguing and the fantastical world of demons so alluring, we have allotted these cases their own chapter. Minor demons or devils also play a role in surviving spells from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, either as forces invoked in ritual incantation or as servants that carry out the bidding of their mistress or master (see Documents 4.9 and 10.5 for examples of all of the themes raised here).

Finally, ritual magic often involved practices that consciously inverted Orthodox norms. Magical incantations ranged across a spectrum from those aligning closely with Orthodox prayers to those explicitly profaning all that Christianity held sacred. Exemplifying the former, many spells open with the ritual beginning of an Orthodox Christian's day (I rise, crossing myself; I stand up, blessing myself), invoke holy figures (Jesus Christ, saints, archangels, the Mother of God), and identify both the spell caster and his desired targets as "slaves of God." At the other extreme, dark magic invokes "father Satan" and his many demons, upends the daily ritual (I rise, not crossing myself; I stand up, not blessing myself), and identifies the parties simply as "slaves." To complicate matters further, however, these two patterns do not oblige us by remaining distinct: spells can switch back and forth midstream. Not only words but also the actions of magical practitioners could blaspheme. Ritual enactment of the noncrossing and nonblessing would be matched with actions such as removing the cross that all Orthodox Christians wore around their necks or desecrating a cross by wearing it under one's foot.

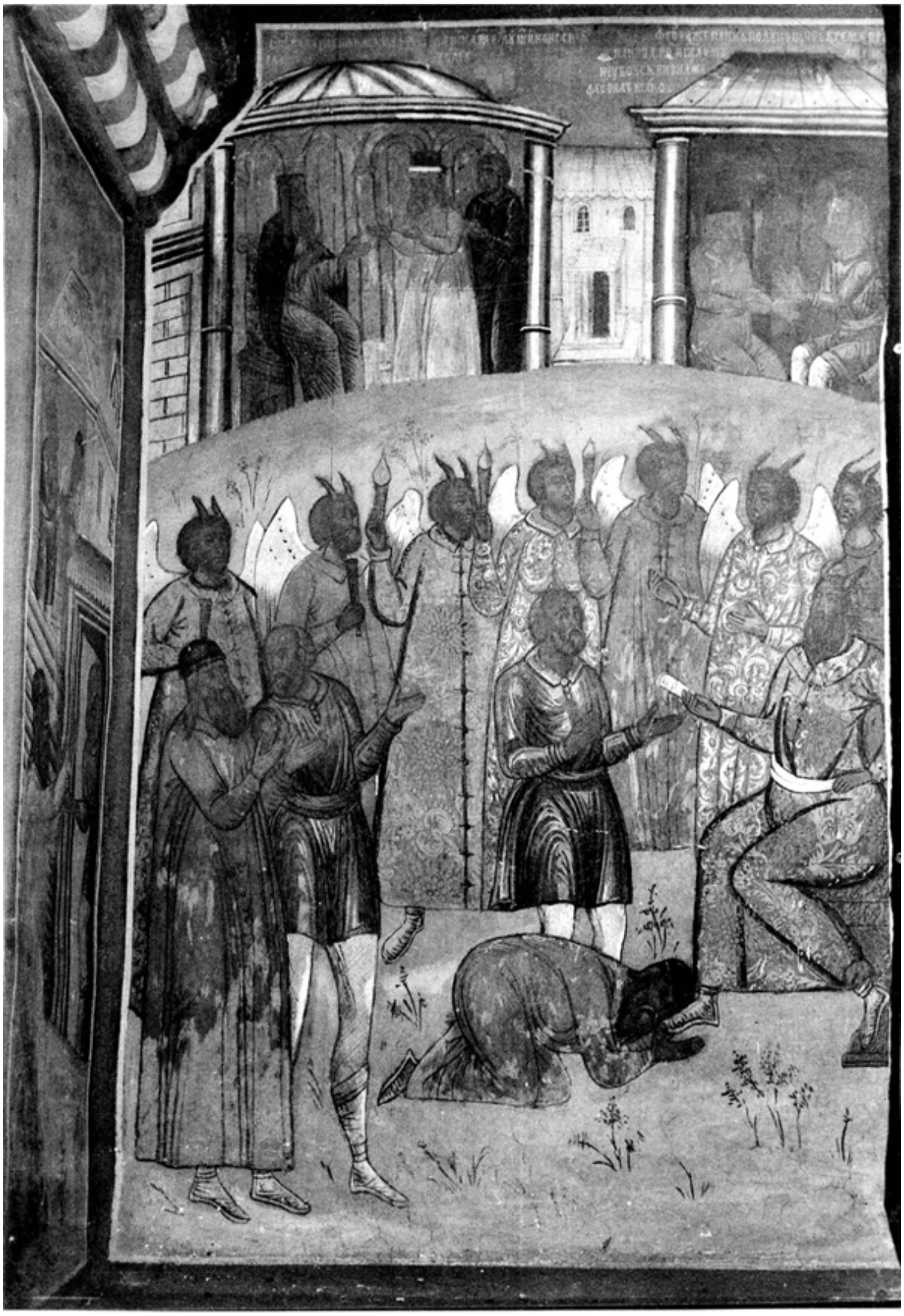


Figure 10: Theofilus and the Devil: 1716 fresco from the west gallery of the Church of St. Elijah in Iaroslavl showing the monk Theofilus in the act of selling his soul to the devil. From N. G. Pervukhin, *Tserkov' Ilii Proroka v Iaroslavle* (Moscow: K. F. Nekrasov, 1915).

9.1 "I SWEAR ALLEGIANCE TO SATAN": A SATANIC PACT IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY (1663-64)

Source: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 653, ll. 20-87; N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Materialy po istorii meditsiny v Rossii* (Tomsk: Tipo-litografiia Sibirsk. T—va pechatn. dela, 1907), 4, nos. 39–40, 197–220.

As already noted, satanic pacts, so central to witchcraft belief in much of Continental Europe, left little trace in Russian trials. Even in instances where Satan makes an appearance, such as this case and the following one, his presence elicits surprisingly little response from either witnesses or the authorities. The case of Prokhorko Kazarinov, a clerk employed in the treasury of the Tikhonov Hermitage, was prosecuted in 1663 in the town of Lukh, about 250 miles northeast of Moscow, the same town that had witnessed a major outbreak of demonic possession just six years earlier (see Document 8.2). Prokhorko—along with the ever-increasing cast of peasants, clerks, and clerics that was drawn into the investigation—stood accused of the usual array of malevolent magical practices: causing illness and death; inflicting possession on female victims; and copying, keeping, and circulating spells "for women." The narrative of the case spirals out, away from the original charges, and pulls in intriguing elements such as attempts at bribing or, failing that, cursing, key witnesses, and the involvement of a violent mob.

Buried deeply in the documentary record is a short spell discovered in the possession of one of the accused. It is unmistakably a pact with the devil. In a few short lines, the spell renounces all that is holy and all the relationships that held Muscovite society together and binds the oath-taker to the service of the devil. This is a remarkable and alarming spell, but elicited no commentary at all by the officials involved in documenting the case. Perhaps this is because, as the governor admitted in his report to the tsar, "Such sorcery is written on that paper that I, your slave, don't dare write it down for you, Great Sovereign." Maybe it was too hot to handle, and considered better left unrepeated and unexplored. It seems more likely, however, that the lack of interest expressed by the authorities stemmed rather from the fact that pacts with the devil simply played little role in Muscovite or early imperial notions of witchcraft. The surprising outcome of the case supports this notion: the key figures were released on security bond. If a pact with the

devil had resonated deeply with the authorities in charge of the investigation, surely they would not have considered letting agents of Satan go free.

The chronology of the trial is difficult to pin down, so we have done our best in ordering the various episodes. The transcript that follows contains some passages where we have paraphrased the record in the interest of brevity.

There is some inconsistency in the names of the central figures. Prokhorko is consistently named Prokhorko, son of Prokhor Kazarinov, but his father is repeatedly identified as Kazar or Kazarinko. Kazar testified to copying spells fifty or sixty years earlier, which could support the idea that he was actually the grandfather rather than the father. Our best guess is that Kazar raised his grandsons Prokhor and Fedka in place of their father. Like many previous cases, this one features nicknames: Trishka, for instance, is also called Trifonka. His formal name was Trifon.

Governor Aleksei Fedorovich Kablukov reports that an accusation of witchcraft has been filed with him in the town of Lukh

To Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia: your slave Aleshka Kablukov petitions.

On January 20 of this year, 1663, Romashko Efimov Kirchin, former church sexton (*d'iachok*) of the Church of Nicholas the Miracleworker in the Tikhonov Hermitage in Lukh Province petitioned to you orally and to me, your slave, in the governor's office in Lukh, and he turned in a witchcraft letter (*volshebnoe pis'mo*). He said: "I took that witchcraft letter from Ermogen, the hegumen of that same Tikhonov Hermitage, and from his grandson Trishka Mikiforov. The witchcraft letter is written in the handwriting of the treasury clerk of the hermitage, Prokhorko Prokhorov Kazarinov. So I, your slave, put that Romashko in face-to-face confrontation with Prokhor and with the hegumen's grandson Trifanko. In the confrontation, Prokhorko said: "the witchcraft letter is in my handwriting, but I copied it at the request of the hegumen's grandson Trishka Mikiforov from the monastic peasant Levka Kornilov of the village of Nastasina…."

And in this year 1663 on January 8, the elders of the Lukh community (*zemskie starosty*) and the townspeople petitioned to you and to me in Lukh and gave to me a signed petition against that Prokhorko, demanding that he be tortured to find out about his witchcraft (*volshebstvo*). In

accordance with their petition, I, your slave, had that Prokhorko tortured, and with torture he repeated the same things: that the witchcraft letter was written in his hand, and he copied it from Levka Kornilov at the request of the hegumen's grandson Trishka Mikiforov. And that Kazarinko, Prokhor's father, and Prokhor's brother, and Kazarinko's son Fedka came to help him escape. And they were questioned but not tortured, and the hegumen's grandson Trishka Mikiforov was not tortured either, because I, your slave, do not dare torture them without your order.

And in this year 1663 on February 5, the Lukh town elders and townspeople petitioned to you, Sovereign, and brought a petition to me, your slave, asking that I write to you in Moscow about their petition and about these sorcerers (*volshebniki*) and saying that I should send all their testimony and speeches taken under torture and everything concerning their witchcraft to you in Moscow. And I, your slave, am sending all the reports and testimony and witchcraft letters, attached below, to you in Moscow to the Military Chancellery and to State Secretary Semen Zaborovskii and to Vasilii Brekhov and Ofonasii Zykov.

Petition (enclosed with Governor Kablukov's report) from the townspeople of Lukh, denouncing Prokhorko Kazarinov for witchcraft and sorcery

> To Sovereign Tsar and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia: your orphans the town elders Grishka Gavrilov, Vaska Mikiforov, and all Lukh townspeople petition. In this year 1663 on January 21, a sorcerer, the treasury clerk of the Tikhonov Hermitage Prokhorko Prokhorov Kazarinov, was brought to the Lukh governor's office, to the governor Aleksei Fedorovich Kablukov, along with his, Prokhor's letter of witchcraft. And we, your orphans, with the whole town, with our poor little wives and children, have been bewitched by all this witchcraft, and many people have died.

Interrogation and sequence of events

In questioning before the governor, Prokhorko accused Hegumen Ermogen and his grandson Trishka Mikiforov and a peasant of that same Tikhonov Hermitage Levka Kornilov. Prokhorko claimed he learned witchcraft from

Levka. He, Prokhorko, copied down Levka's words with his own hand and then gave the paper with the spells to the hegumen's grandson Trishka Mikiforov. He said that he and Levka consorted constantly with the hegumen in his cell.

The hegumen's grandson Trishka said in questioning before the governor that he took the witchcraft letter in Prokhorko's handwriting for himself, and that witchcraft letter now is in the possession of the governor.

Sovereign, when Prokhorko was arrested in connection with the witchcraft letter and was questioned, he implicated the peasant Levka Kornilov. He said: "I copied that witchcraft letter from him at the request of the hegumen's grandson Trishka." So officers were sent to find that Levka, but they didn't find him at his house. [They eventually found him] in the hegumen Ermogen's cell, and for that the hegumen Ermogen was questioned in the governor's office, and in questioning he said: "That Levka was in my cell after Prokhorko had given his testimony, and I guarantee my statement with my signature." And after he wrote that statement, the hegumen released Levka from the cell, and he disappeared without a trace. The hegumen stated that he had wanted to turn Levka in but didn't succeed in doing so. He hid away no one knows where.

At the fourth hour of the night, Prokhorko also escaped from under the guard of Iakim Lazarev, who had held him bound in chains….

And the governor, having assembled many searchers, caught Prokhorko in the monastic property in the village of Gorodka in the field by the river, still in chains. The governor had him brought back to Lukh to the governor's office and questioned him to discover how he escaped from under guard.

And Prokhorko said that Pronka Pokindaev, a monastic peasant of that same hermitage of the village of Pankina, the father-in-law of Levka the sorcerer, told him: "The Lukh townspeople gave the governor a signed petition against you for sorcery, so the governor ordered you tortured. And because you accused my son-in-law of witchcraft, he has been taken to the town, but he hasn't confessed to anything. Why did you implicate my son-in-law in witchcraft? Even if they caught my son-in-law in town, he

wouldn't have confessed, and you should have just said the letter was written by a passerby or by some wandering fellow." So he, Prokhorko, fearing Pronka's threats, escaped from under guard. His own brother Fedka came with a horse-drawn sleigh and took him away.

Fedka Kazarinov said in questioning before the governor: "Hegumen Ermogen sent me to get my brother Prokhorko, and I went to get my brother with a horse-drawn sleigh from my father Kazar Ivanov's house."

And, Sovereign, Prokhorko was tortured, and with torture he said the same things that he said previously. The hegumen's grandson Trifanko and Prokhorko's father Kazarinko and Prokhor's brother Fedka Kazarinov were not tortured. But, Sovereign, the testimony led us to Hegumen Ermogen in his cell. Merciful Sovereign … have mercy on us, your orphans. Order, Sovereign, Governor Aleksei Fedorovich Kablukov to write to you from Lukh about our sorcerers and send all the documentation to you.

In the year 1663 on January 20, the former church sexton Romashko Efimov Korchin petitioned the great sovereign Aleksei Mikhailovich orally in Lukh in the governor's office and handed in a witchcraft letter. And he said: "I took that witchcraft letter from Trishka Mikiforov, the hegumen's grandson, and that witchcraft letter is written in the hand of the treasury clerk of the hermitage, Prokhorka Prokhorov Kazarinov."

Copy of the witchcraft letter in Prokhor's handwriting, word for word

I, male slave of God So-and-so, go out to an open field and as the moon shines on me and as the stars look at the moon and cleave to it, so may the female slave of God So-and-so look at me and cleave to me. And as the cuckoo bird grieves for her nestlings and cries for them, so may that female slave of God So-and-so grieve and cry for me. And as the stars delight in the moon, so may that female slave of God delight when she sees me. And as a mare grieves for her foal, so may the female slave of God grieve for me every hour of every day. I go, male slave of God, to the ocean-sea, and on the ocean-sea lies a burning white rock. On that rock stands a dry tree, and as that tree withers away, so may that female slave of God dry and wither away for me, slave of God. On that tree sits an iron man. He beats with his iron staff on the burning white rock, and as the rock catches fire, so may that female slave of God catch fire for me, carnally and fiercely and with all her flesh and being. And when she doesn't see me, male slave of God, may she grieve and cry and may she leave her father and mother and for all eternity, Amen. For all eternity, Amen. For all eternity, Amen.

Continuation of the investigation

On January 21, 1663, in Lukh in the governor's office, Governor Aleksei Kablukov questioned the treasury clerk Prokhorko Prokhorov about his witchcraft letter written in his handwriting, and in questioning he said he never copied any witchcraft letter and he didn't give it to anyone and he doesn't know any witchcraft and has nothing to do with it. "I don't remember who I gave that witchcraft letter to, and I never bewitched anyone." The letter was shown to Prokhorko, and he said: "That letter is in my handwriting, and I did write it from the dictation of the peasant sorcerer Levka Kormukhin of the village of Nastasina. I don't have any other witchcraft letters."

On January 23, 1663, the former church sexton Romashko Efimev Korchin said in questioning: "The hegumen's grandson Trifanko Mikiforov gave me that witchcraft letter in Prokhorko's handwriting."

That same day, Prokhorko was questioned again, and he said: "That witchcraft letter is written in my handwriting, and I gave it to the hegumen's grandson Trifonka at his request, and who Trifonko seduced with it, which girls or women, that I don't know."

That same day, Hegumen Ermogen's grandson Trishka Mikiforov was questioned, and he said: "I was at Prokhorko's house for dinner in the fall, and I took the witchcraft letter from Prokhorko and brought it home with me. I was at my grandfather's in the fall, and he started to talk to me. 'I have articles of magic and he doesn't!' and he brought me that article, but I didn't take it from him. I took it from him and brought it home later."

And Trishka Mikiforov was given a confrontation with Prokhorko, and at the confrontation Prokhorko denounced Trishka. He said he gave Trishka the letter he had written, and he gave it to him at Trishka's request. Prokhorko said: "He asked me for that spell and he took it from me to use for fornication (*bludnoe delo*)." At the confrontation Trifanko said: "I took the witchcraft letter from Prokhorko and showed it to Romashka Korchin, and Romashko didn't give it back to me."

April 23, 1664, order to release Trifonka (Trishka) Popov on surety bond (*poruka*)

From Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich: an order to Sergei Afonasevich Bykov in Lukh. A prisoner from Lukh, Trifonka Popov, petitioned to us that he's been sitting in jail for a long time and we should let him go on surety. When you get this order let him out on surety.

Written in Moscow, April 23, 1664.

(This order is followed by a report from Governor Bykov saying that he has released Trifonka on surety bond. Next follows a surety bond, signed on the back by Trifonka's guarantors.)

Petition from Prokhorko Prokhorov Kazarinov to the tsar

In past, in the year 1661/62, I, your orphan, copied a verse (*spell*) for women (*zhenskoi stikh*) from the monastic peasant Levka Kornilov at the request of Trifonka Popov. We hoped to catch Levka red-handed with this verse for women. But Levka, recognizing his guilt, was afraid that we, your orphans, would expose him publicly, and so he ran away from Lukh, it is unknown where. And I, your orphan, was identified by my handwriting and taken to the town of Lukh and was brought before Governor Aleksei Kablukov with Trifanka, and Governor Kablukov questioned me, on the basis of my handwriting. Trifonka testified that I wrote that letter at his request, and he signed his statement.

The governor tortured us three times with various tortures: he burned us with fire and with pincers and broke our ribs, and he tore me, your orphan, to pieces with shaking. And from those tortures I, your orphan, lie in prison like one dead, and I am dying of hunger and I know of no other guilt before you, Great Sovereign, other than that I copied a letter at Trifonka's bidding from Levka in order to expose him with that spell for women. And meanwhile Trifonka was released from jail by your order, and Levka is still in flight, hiding in an unknown location, while I, your orphan, am stuck (*hard to read*) and suffer in a dark prison and die of starvation, and my mother and sisters, all three, and my poor little wife and children, all four, drag themselves from house to house begging and are dying of hunger.

Merciful Sovereign Tsar … Have mercy upon me your orphan. Order me released from jail in Lukh on honest surety and send your sovereign order to the governor so that I don't die of hunger in jail and don't utterly perish.

(Here follows a recap of the case, but it adds that another fornication letter was taken from Prokhorko's house. Trifonka says he took the letter from Prokhorko and showed it to Romashko, who took the letter to the governor's office and showed it to Governor Aleksei Kablukov.)

Governor Aleksei Fedorovich Kablukov's report

And another criminal witchcraft letter was taken from Prokhorko's father in the monastic settlement, and about that letter he said: it is written in his hand and he copied it from a townsman of Lukh named Osip Volodimirov Plautin about fifty years ago or more, but Osip Plautin has since died. He himself never did any sorcery and didn't study it and never bewitched anyone. He copied this letter in his youth.

Under torture, Prokhor said that Levka bewitched the nun Evgenia, the cousin of the monastic peasant Grigorii. He bewitched her in the monastery where she lived with that priest Grigorii.

Romashko Evimov Korchin had been hauled before a previous governor, Mikifor Obrutskii, in Lukh earlier on witchcraft charges, and when Romashko was taken away under guard, he, Prokhor, found a witchcraft letter in Romashko's house. He gave it to a priest of the Tikhonov Hermitage named Oksen Ivanov, and he took six silver rubles from the priest Oksen for that letter.

When questioned Priest Oksen said: "Prokhor gave me a witchcraft letter in Romashko's hand this year on January 15. When Romashko sent a legal summons for me, I gave Prokhor six rubles in copper money for the spell in order to avoid being caught up in legal expenses and suffering losses because of Romashko's suit." (*Spells "to power," discussed in* Chapter 7 *on "Power Relations and Hierarchy," were considered useful in avoiding trouble with the law.*)

But Prokhor has had that letter since Romashko was called before Governor Obrutskoi.

When Trishka Mikiforov Popov, the hegumen's grandson, was tortured, he confessed that he had the other half of the witchcraft letter written by Prokhorko. He tore that letter in two. (*This was a not uncommon way to break the power of a written spell.*) But Trishka maintained that the sorcerer Prokhor told him they would catch the sorcerer Levka that way, and he would say not one thing to incriminate himself.

Witchcraft letter in Romashko's hand

> I renounce our creator, Christ-God, and the churches of God and the most holy liturgy and the vespers and matins and all divinity and my father and mother and clan and tribe and swear allegiance to Satan and his beloved lackeys.

And such sorcery is written on that paper that I, your slave, don't dare write it down for you, Great Sovereign.

Governor Aleksei Fedorovich Kablukov's report

On December 24, 1662, the Lukh priest Oksen Ivanov petitioned the Lukh governor's office against the monastic elder Efrem and his son Romashka. The priest complained that Efrem and Romashka threatened him and his wife with bewitchment and his wife has suffered painfully (*zaskorbela*) since that time.

So Governor Kablukov put Romashko in jail and held Efremko in the local policing office (*gubnaia izba*) pending the tsar's order.

(An order came from Moscow instructing the governor to release Romashko on surety bond and send him to Moscow to the Monastic Chancellery by April 26, 1663, but at that time Prokhor hadn't yet incriminated Romashko and Romashko's witchcraft letter hadn't been found. A secondary line of investigation turns up evidence that Trishka's father, Priest Mikifor, and a townsquare clerk named Oska Chernyi pressured Prokhorko to retract his testimony incriminating Trishka.)

Prokhorko complained that the Moscow priest Mikifor Epifanov and the clerk Oska Chernyi came to him in jail and said to him: "We have come to an agreement with the governor that you won't be tortured any more if you

exonerate my son Trishka of witchcraft. Plus, we will give you a hundred rubles or a note good for as much. Say he is innocent in the witchcraft matter."

And Prokhorko said:

> The priest threatened me. He said: "If you don't exculpate [my son], I will make you sick, but if you do what I ask, I will give you a hundred rubles. And if you don't believe me, I will give you a written guarantee that I will get you out of prison. Just get my son out of jail."

And I started to write what the priest told me, a confession petition to exonerate Trishka Popov, in order to free myself from prison, but I hadn't finished writing the petition before Priest Mikifor and the clerk Oska grabbed it from my hands through the prison tube [through which they were talking to me].

In direct confrontation between Prokhor and Priest Mikifor, Mikifor said he came to the prison but never talked to Prokhorko about exonerating his son and didn't try to bribe him with money. "And I didn't tell him I'd agreed with the governor to stop torturing him and I didn't take a confession petition from him, and the clerk Oska wasn't with me that day, and Oska didn't take any document from Prokhor either."

In direct confrontation Prokhor reiterated that Priest Mikifor was at the prison fence and sent the prison trustee (*tseloval'nik*) Pashka Vasilev away to get a piece of paper so they could talk without being overheard. In response, Priest Mikifor said: "I was at the prison fence with Prokhor's father-in-law, Priest Adam Vasilev, but I never sent for any paper. Priest Adam called me over to talk with Prokhor."

… (*A face-to-face confrontation was held between Prokhor and the townsquare clerk Oska.*) Oska said: "Prokhor gave me the confession petition himself; I didn't tear it away from him. Priest Mikifor wasn't there that day, and Prokhorko gave it to me through the tube."

Prokhorko insisted: "They did tear it away from me. The priest was at the local policing office that day, and afterward, Priest Mikifor came to the prison fence and said: 'Write the full confession petition and I will give you back this one,' and then Oska left with the petition."

Pashka Vasilev, the prison trustee, was questioned. He said he let Priest Mikifor approach the prison fence, and then he went to get some paper for the priest, and he bought some with the priest's money and gave it to Prokhorko and then took it back again….

Prokhorko under new torture admitted to bewitching Priest Grigorii's sister-in-law with hiccuping possession but admits to no other witchcraft and denies working witchcraft with other people.

Trishka was tortured again and under torture admitted he took the witchcraft letter for lecherous purposes and that his father and Oska came to the jail and tried to get him out but he didn't know if they offered a hundred-ruble bribe. "And the sorcerer Levka did visit my grandfather in his monastic cell, but whether he cast spells or not I don't know."

An order was sent from the tsar telling the governor to send Priest Mikifor to Moscow to the Military Chancellery.

Trishka petitioned, saying that Prokhorko now repents of slandering him when he sees how ferociously he is being tortured, but, he says, Prokhorko didn't finish writing his letter of confession because townspeople threatened him. And they cruelly and drunkenly torture people.

Orders from the sovereign

*(Governor Aleksei Kablukov is ordered to release Trishka to go to Moscow on surety. 1663/64 A new governor [*voevoda*] arrives in Lukh: Sergei Afanasevich Bykov.)*

Prokhorko and Trifonko are released on surety bond

(This is a rough draft of the order, so much of it is crossed out.)

From Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich to Lukh to Sergei Afanasevich Bykov. In the past year 1663 on February 7, the hegumen's grandson Trifonka Popov and treasury clerk Prokhorko Prokhov were put in jail in Lukh in connection with the matter of a criminal witchcraft letter. And in that matter they were tortured firmly in Lukh three times and burned with fire, and they still did not confess to witchcraft. And in this year 1664 on June 19, Trifonka Popov by our sovereign decree was freed from jail and sent to

Moscow under surety. And we, the great sovereign, favored the monastic treasury clerk and ordered him released from jail and placed him under strong surety guaranteeing that in the future he will not write any such criminal letters. And when this our sovereign order reaches you, you will release Prokhor from jail and order him released under firm written sureties that henceforth he will not write criminal letters of any sort and will not give any such things to others nor keep them for himself, and he will not commit any mischief (*durna*) against anybody…. And you should send records of the surety to the Military Chancellery to our state secretary Dementei Bashmakov and to Fedor Griboedov and Vasilii Semenov. Leave a copy of the original surety document in Lukh, signed by your hand, and send a copy to the administrative office (*prikaznaia izba*). This is our order.

And as for Romashka Korchin and the monastic peasant Levka Kornilov from whom the witchcraft letter was taken, they have run away. Order a search for them in Lukh town and Lukh Province by all possible means, and having found them, order them put in jail until our sovereign order arrives, and write about that to us, the great sovereign, in the Military Chancellery.

Written in Moscow, August 20, 1664.

9.2 "MY FATHER SATAN": SPELLS, POSSESSION, AND FRATERNAL RIVALRY (1672)

Sources: RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 679, ll. 283–91; stlb. 861, ll. 29–35; stlb. 1006, 54 ll.

In May 1670, a man named Ivan Leontev (son of Leontii) Laptev accused his brother Osip of collecting and keeping written spells and of conspiring with some peasants to bewitch other peasants in the region. Ivan turned in a set of written spells as material proof. The spells survived, affixed amid the various reports, orders, and transcripts of testimony taken with and without torture, allowing us to see the specific forms of magic invoked in these texts. The case record discusses *zaklinaniia* (incantations) and *molitvy zaklinanye* (incantatory prayers), but most commonly these were referred to as *pis'ma*, or

zagovornye pis'ma, literally "letters" or "spell letters." The incantations were directed toward healing, fending off fevers and offering protection from diabolical assault or possession. They invoke Christian figures (the Mother of God, Archangel Michael) and apocryphal personages ("Father Sisinnius," based on a mythological Greek hero who was repurposed as an Orthodox saint of dubious validity).[2] We reproduce just one of these magical texts here, a protective spell against fever, personified as demonesses. Even though the spell might appear to conform to Christian norms by calling on Father Sisinnius and the Archangel Michael to join forces against one of the demonesses, the court viewed it and the rest of the magical texts presented in the case as "demonic" and even "heretical" and "God-denying."

Following an investigation in 1670, Osip (nicknamed Oska) went to jail, where he languished in bitter conditions for two years. The documentation presented here begins with Osip's appeal for release, composed in late 1671 or early 1672. The appeal precipitated a new round of investigation, interrogation, confrontation, and torture. Osip's testimony provides horrific details about the kinds of torture he endured, which underscores how desperate his situation in prison must have been to make him willing to reopen the case and face a return to the torture chamber.

The situation is unusual in pitting brother against brother and also because the brothers were both provincial landholders of middling rank. In his appeal, Osip speculates that his treacherous brother set up the whole case in order to cheat him out of his half of their shared estate. He formulates a countercharge against his brother: Ivan, he claims, was the one who owned the magical texts in the first place and then planted them on the innocent Osip. Further, Osip charges that Ivan and his peasant co-conspirators coached a peasant woman to feign the symptoms of possession. This is perhaps the earliest documentation of an accusation of faking possession, a skeptical position that would become central to juridical understandings from the time of Peter the Great (see the previous chapter on possession). Ivan's purported peasant accomplices suffered in the questioning and torture both in the original investigation and again when the inquiry was reopened on appeal. The peasant suspects all came from the estate of Andrei Bezobrazov, a provincial landholder who himself would become embroiled in witchcraft accusations soon afterward. The suspects included Sereshka Ivanov, called Borov, a peasant healer on Bezobrazov's estate, a peasant woman named Avdotitsa Vasileva, and their respective young children, who would also be swept up in the cruelty of the investigation. As is so often true, no resolution of the inquiry survives.

Jurisdiction of the Laptev investigation was split between the governors of Kostroma and Iaroslavl Provinces, and, since it stretched out across a number of years, new officials rotated in and out of office in the two town centers. Confusing matters still further, two of the governors of Iaroslavl shared the same last name. The two Anichkov governors—Grigorii Mikhailovich and Ivan Aleksandrovich—were not brothers but were probably related.

The trial record includes a number of instances where standard judicial process was violated. Osip complains at one point that he has not been allowed the opportunity to confront his brother directly. Elsewhere he objects that because the local governors corruptly favor Ivan, their friend, they have failed to conduct a full, general investigation.

Instead, they have carried out a search deliberately biased toward Ivan's side of the story. Most egregiously, the record also raises the specter of an unauthorized administration of torture: peasant witnesses attest that the estate bailiff Sereshka Terentev chained them and tortured them in his own master's home on his own volition, without formal permission from the tsar. Two young peasant children, the son and the daughter of two of the prime suspects, were also caught up in the harsh interrogation. According to Osip's bitter complaint, not only the estate bailiff but also the governors and authorized officials of the town of Kostroma violated the law in administering torture "without your sovereign order" and without having conducted the requisite investigation needed to justify torture legally. Even in a juridical system that relied on the use of torture and expressed no doubts about its ethical and practical benefits, unauthorized torture ranked as a criminal offense. (See also the previous document, where the governor says he does not dare to torture anyone without the tsar's directive.) In this case, however, the procedural violations incurred no penalties; the estate bailiff seems to have continued to serve as a key witness and as a prison guard for the state until the suspects were transferred to the governor's office in Kostroma, and the Kostroma officials blithely applied torture at will, suffering no consequences.

Already well into the process of appeal and counterappeal, Osip raised a matter of "sovereign's word"—that is, he claimed to know of a case of lese majesty. Such cases were automatically bumped up to the highest level, meaning his case would be heard in Moscow and not in Kostroma. Since he had already complained that he could not receive a fair trial in Kostroma, where the authorities favored his brother, he would have welcomed this shift of venue. Making his hope explicit, he closed the petition with a request that the tsar have mercy and bring him to Moscow to the Military Chancellery. We are not reproducing the petition here, and it is not clear whether or not it brought about Osip's intended result, but it adds an interesting twist to the case.

We have combined passages from three different archival accounts to try to reconstitute a sense of the Laptev case as it extended across time. We begin with a document from 1672 that recapitulates the opening salvo of the trial with a verbatim copy of the original 1670 complaint.

Governor Dementii Tarbeev reports to the tsar on the original case brought against Osip Laptev by his brother Ivan Laptev in May 1670

To the Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince, your slaves, Governor Demka Tarbeev and Grishka Oshitkov, petition. In May 1670, Ivan Leontev Laptev petitioned to you, Sovereign, against his brother Osip Leontev Laptev, and he submitted to us a signed petition and God-denying spells written in Osip's hand, so we questioned him.

Ivan Laptev's original petition against his brother Osip Laptev

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, I, your slave Ivashko Leontev Laptev, petition against my brother Oska Laptev. In this year, I picked up on the road to Nikolskoi some … demonic (*vrazhi*) letters, and those letters were written in my brother Osip's hand, and by those letters he has bewitched many Orthodox Christian people, including (*a long list of peasant names*), and Andrei Ilich Bezobrazov's peasant woman Olenka, the wife of the ironsmith Afonka. She shrieks against another of Andrei Bezobrazov's peasants, Sereshka Ivanov, called Borov, and against his son Grishka, and against Bezobrazov's people [including] a peasant woman of that same boyar's village Iakovtsovo, the widow Avdotitsa, Ivashko Firsov's wife, and against her son Sidorko, and against Osip Laptev for causing the bewitchment. [And she also shrieks that] Sergei Borov and his young daughter joined in plotting that bewitchment even while they were imprisoned and held in chains in the boyar's house.

And also, on the Monday of Holy Week, my brother Osip had me over to his house and gave me grass in some beer in the presence of many other landowners. I saw what was in the drink and asked him about that grass, and he said it was [nothing to worry about]. I drank a little and … then I became bewitched, and since that time I have suffered from the drink Osip gave me and from the grasses….

1672: Rescript of the case brought originally in 1670

In March 1672, the sovereign's decree was sent to Iaroslavl to the attendant of the royal table Ivan Alekandrovich Anichkov and ordered that he look into the case of Ivan Laptev against his brother Osip for criminality and heresy and spells (*zagovornye pis'ma*).

Ivan Laptev petitioned against his brother again and repeated his petition of 1670:

> He found demonic letters in his brother's hand, and using those letters Osip caused many people to be bewitched, Orthodox Christians, including Olenka, the wife of the smith Afonka…. She shrieks against … Sereshka Ivanov, called Borov, and against his son Grishka and [against]

the widow Avdotitsa, her son Sidorko, and against Osip Laptev for causing that bewitchment. And in that same petition Ivan wrote that on Monday of Holy Week, his brother Osip Laptev fed Ivan grasses in his beer at his house…. Ivan drank that beer, and he was strongly affected, and since the time when he drank it, he has been suffering from bewitchment. And since that time he has been sick and in agony. And when he heard about the petition, in the presence of other landlords, Osip threatened that Ivan's life would be buried in the ground.

And he asked that the sovereign order an inquiry.
And by the sovereign's decree, [an investigation was begun]….
May 16, 1670, [the investigators found]:

Concerning the peasant woman Olenka, wife of the smith Afonka, who was described in Ivan's petition as bewitched and sick: the investigation report states that this woman lies sick and in bewitchment she cries out and speaks against Bezobrazov's peasants Sereshka Borov and his children Grishka and Onashka (*elsewhere he is called Iliushka*) and against Osip Laptev. She cries out that he gave them grasses and that all of those people gave the grasses to Ivan Firsov's widow Avdiushka and to her daughter Fekolka, and they bewitched her.

And Osip Laptev said in questioning that he doesn't know of any demonic letters and he doesn't keep any demonic letters written in his own hand or spells for mercy in his house and he never wrote any such letters and he doesn't know anything about them. And he didn't bewitch Andrei's peasant woman Olenka, and he doesn't know who bewitched her, and he also isn't aware that she cries out against the peasant Sereshka Borov and others as asserted in his brother's petition. And Andrei Bezobrazov's peasant bailiff Sereshka Terentev did torture the widow Ovdoshka with her son Sidorko, but he doesn't know what they said. And on Monday of Holy Week, his brother Ivan came to his house and he brought him beer with some crushed stuff in it, but it was just a powdered bit of hops (?) and some buds from hops, not a magical potion and not poisonous grass. And furthermore, after he drank the beer, Ivan didn't cry out; he only said that his throat was sore, and he got sick when he got back home. And since then he, Osip, hasn't said anything threatening about his brother and didn't say that he would be buried in the earth.

At that time, the landlords Gavrilo Anofreev Polozov and Mikita Tretiakov, and their people—Iurka with three other companions—and his

brother Ivan's peasant Klimko Paraonov were there too.

Andrei Bezobrazov's man Sereshka Terentev in questioning said: In this year 1670, about seven weeks ago, one of his landlord's peasant women, Olenka, became bewitched, and in her bewitchment she cried out against Sereshka Borov and his son Grishka and the peasant widow Avdiushka and her son Sidorko and against Osip Laptev. She shrieked the accusation that Sereshka Borov and his companions had poisonous grass that they got from him, Osip Laptev. He, Sereshka Terentev, heard that cry (*klich*) himself, and many nearby people did too.

He, [the peasant bailiff] Sereshka Terentev, questioned the widow Avdiushka's son Sidorko, who told him that he gave that poisonous grass to the woman Olenka. Following his mother's instructions, he sprinkled it in her food, in cooked peas. His mother got that grass from Sereshka Borov, and Sereshka got it from Osip Laptev. And he, Sereshka [Terentev], didn't question the peasant Sereshka Borov or widow Avdiushka or her children, her daughter Fekolka, but he wrote about it to his boyar Andrei Bezobrazov, and he held them in a cell [on the estate].

[Sidorko said that] his mother had him sprinkle that grass so that the bewitched woman wouldn't cry out against his mother or against Sereshka Borov and Osip Laptev, or against him, Sidorko, and his sister Fekolka, but the bailiff Sereshka tortured his mother and sister about that bewitchment, and his mother confessed everything, but his sister didn't confess anything, and she knows nothing about that bewitchment.

And the widow Avdiushka in questioning said Grishka Borov bewitched that woman Olenka, and he got the grass from [his father] Sereshka Borov, and she sent her son Sidorko to that woman Olenka to sprinkle grass in her peas so that she wouldn't be able to accuse her and Sereshka and Osip Laptev…. But her daughter Fekolka doesn't know anything about it.

The peasant bailiff tortured them in his house, but the daughter didn't confess to anything.

Sereshka Ivanov, called Borov, … denied everything that Avdiushka and her son said.

Sereshka's son Iliushka said he didn't know anything.

(Avdiushka and her son were placed in direct confrontation with Sereshka Borov. The three peasant suspects were all questioned in the torture chamber before torture was administered and again while being tortured. They all stuck by their earlier testimony.)

But Ivan Laptev presented some papers containing demonic magical spells and said they were written in his brother's handwriting. Osip, seeing the papers, admitted that the God-denying letter is written in his hand and he wrote it in Smolensk in 1654/55. And on the original it says, "Osip Laptev signed this."

After questioning, Osip and Sereshka Borov and the widow Avdiushka and her son Sidorko were put in jail. Sereshka Terentev took sureties [to guarantee the good behavior of] the girl Fekolka and the boy Iliushka.

On July 26, 1671, Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich sent an order about this case to the boyars, and the boyars, having heard the case, decreed that an order should be sent to Iaroslavl to the conciliar nobleman (*dumnyi dvorianin*) and governor Grigorii Mikhailovich Anichkov and his colleagues, ordering them to send officers out to Kostroma and to collect all those people.

1672: Osip Leontev Laptev appeals to be released from prison, where he has languished for two years

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Great, Little, and White Russia, your guilty slave Oska Leontev Laptev petitions. In the past year 1669/70, my brother slandered me in a false petition, accusing me of causing bewitchment. He composed that petition for the sake of my share of our estate. In his petition he claimed that I had bewitched him, my own brother, and also Semen Davydov Zhdanov, and that Semen died with his spiritual father by his side. And he, Ivan, joined forces and plotted with Sereshka Terentev, who serves as the peasant bailiff for the landlord Andrei Ilich Bezobrazov, and also with a peasant man named Olforka Rodionov and a peasant woman named Avdotitsa Vasileva, and they taught that peasant woman Avdotitsa to shriek as if she were bewitched. And he, Ivan, planted among my possessions some incantatory

spells and prayers to the saints (*molitvy zaklinanye sviatye*) and against the coming of the devil (*i ot nakhozhdeniia diiavola*).

And in the past year 1654/55, I, your slave, had to do my service for you in Smolensk, besieging a tower, and he, Ivan, went to collect our payment and supplies. And he brought those prayers back with him, and … I, your slave, sinned before God and before you, Great Sovereign, in that I didn't write to report him, and I returned the papers to my brother Ivan, bearing in mind our common parentage. The papers stayed in Ivan's possession from that time.

In response to Ivan's untruthful, slanderous, baseless calumny and lying petition, Governor Dementei Tarbeev and [his lieutenant] Grigorei Oshitkov tortured me hard in Kostroma. [They carried out the torture] without your sovereign order and without conducting a general search, out of friendship for my brother Ivan. During two hours of torture they inflicted thirty blows and poured water on me. And in testimony given in response to questioning and torture I called for a general search and referred to his, Ivan's, spiritual father, the priest Gavrilo Kozmin of the village Maksimovskoe, to affirm that I don't do this kind of thing and never did. [And I asked] that they question the local people about Ivan's baseless slander and about my simplemindedness, but the officials didn't question local people, didn't conduct any investigation…. Those people were never questioned, and no one was ever sent to them as they claimed.

Since questioning and interrogation with torture, I, your slave, have been held in jail for two years, and now I'm dying of starvation. And in the past, Sovereign, on June 3, 1665, Ivan and his companion Pashka Maksimov stole from my outbuilding (*poval'nia*). He took a box with the documents and deeds to the estate, and the documentation on all of our people and peasants and household residences and manumission and enserfment documents for peasants, and debt contracts that we held jointly, and he stole all of those documents from me, worth 1,200 rubles, and change.

Spells submitted as evidence in the case

Prayer of Father Sisinnius to prevent fevers[3]

(Fevers= triasavitsy*, feminine noun, from the root* triasti*—to shake; personified as the fevers, the daughters of Herod, or here, the demonic daughters of Satan:)*

Once upon a time Saint Sisinnius came from Mount Sinai and met a female demon (*besitsa*) with eyes of fire and hands of iron and hair of a camel, a cursed devilish vision. Sisinnius says to her: "O deceiver, O evil one! Whence come you, and where are you going, and what is your name?" And the demoness says to him: "My father Satan sent me from the deep abysses to work the most evil, filthy deceptions (*zlye pakosti*) among mankind: to dry out the bones of women and to dry up the mother's milk and to kill infants and to darken people's vision and weaken their veins. I also cause babies to be born deaf and dumb, and others I kill right after birth. All this I do to stun people. No sooner had the Mother of God Mary given birth to the Savior, the True Word, than I came to deceive her, as she still lay naked after giving birth. But immediately the Archangel Michael saw what was going on and flew in from the heavenly circles. And he said to me, 'I am sent from the unseen tsar to forestall cursedness from afflicting mankind,' and raising his right hand (*text reconstructed by meaning here*), he said: 'If you don't swear an oath to me right now, do not dare approach mankind. And if I learn that someone has called out my name [to summon me to protect against you], then you shall quake, o devil's spawn! You will be unforgiven. Take an oath, accursed one, and if you do not heed me, then I, Michael the Unwavering, will do as I have warned.' "

Hearing this, the demoness shrank in fear, fell to her knees, and said, from fear and from the abyss, to the great Archangel Michael: "Whoever can write my twelve names will be safe from [me.] I will be unable to enter his house, or to afflict (*lit. go to*) his wife, or his children. I will be unable to drive him from his house. My names are:

(1) the demoness Matrit'
(2) Veshitsa (*Hanged One*)
(3) Obrazuiushcha (*One Taking Form*)
(4) Oubeitsa (*Murderer*)
(5) Pokhotliusha (*Desirous or Craving One*)
(6) Elina (*Idol Worshipper?*)
(7) Nepiriia (*Non-Feaster*)[4]
(8) (*Number 8 is missing. The list jumps from 7 to 9!*)
(9) Vzydyshchia (*Farter*)
(10) Izglazhoushchana (*Drowned One or Skinny Bones.*)
(11) Golendui (*Lanky One?*)
(12) Likiianu (*Lazy One?*)"

Bar her, Michael, from the ciborium (*the vessel holding the Eucharist or a canopy covering the altar*) of the Great God, and from the altar of the eight heavens, from the six-winged cherubim, and from the many-eyed seraphim. Fear, Cursed One, and flee from this slave of God So-and-so. The great and elevated name, without any swearing of oaths, and with unwavering thoughts, to the Ruler of All, the fiery scepter, Michael, take action,[5] and with the hundred, with the twelve legions of angels of God, strike fear. Flee from slave of God So-and-so to your twelve names (*Some of the names are spelled differently here than in the list above*): Besitsa, Veshitsa, Obrazuiushcha, Oubitsa; Pokhobliaiushcha, Elina, Martuia, Naniria, Vzydushchia, Izglozhiushchaia, Golendui, Likiiane. And he (*Michael*) says: "When someone calls my name, Michael, flee from her (*the demoness*) immediately! Be gone, Devil!" In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. And now and forever and for all eternity, Amen.

In response to Osip's appeal, the case is reopened, December 3, 1672

And in this year 1672 on December 3,[6] … the attendant of the royal table Ivan Aleksandrovich Anichkov and Governor Dementei Tarbeev and the clerk Grigori Oshitkov [were ordered to investigate].

Osip Laptev and the attendant of the royal table Andrei Bezobrazov's peasant Sereshka Borov and the peasant Avdiushka were questioned with great violence (*pristrast'e*), each separately, to confirm their previous testimony taken both during uncoerced interrogation and with torture.

Testimony of the attendant of the royal table Andrei Bezobrazov's peasant Avdiushka

And in questioning, Andrei Bezobrazov's peasant Avdiushka denied her previous confessions and said that she had slandered herself with those confessions without any basis, unable to tolerate the torture of Andrei Bezobrazov's bailiff Sereshka Terentev. The bailiff Sereshka tortured her three separate times in the landlord's house. He beat her with switches and wanted to burn her with fire in the presence of the peasant elder Filka Fedorov and of other peasants.

And in Kostroma, she said she falsely incriminated herself at the town hall. At the prompting of the bailiff and the elder and peasants, she testified that she had sent grasses to the peasant woman Olenka via her son Sidorko.

And she said that Sereskha Borov gave her that grass and told her to sprinkle it in food so that Olenka wouldn't shriek. And Sereshka told her that Osip Laptev had given him that grass. But actually, she said, she didn't take any grass from Sereshka and she didn't send her son Sidor to the woman Olenka, and didn't tell her to sprinkle it in food.

And the woman Avdiushka was questioned to determine why the bailiff asked her about those grasses.

Avdiushka said her son Sidorko went to that woman Olenka to borrow an ax for chopping wood, and after her son took the ax from Olenka, she started to shriek and to call out against Sidorko, and then against her, Avdiushka. For that reason the bailiff tortured her son Sidorko and ordered her, Avdiushka, to incriminate herself, and her son also confessed. And now she says her son Sidorko is not around: Governor Dementei Tarbeev and the clerk Grigorei Oshitkov released him three years ago by her petition, and where he is now, she doesn't know. And about Sereshka Borov she knows only that he heals babies and livestock from illness.

Questioning and torturing of Sereshka Borov

And Sereshka Borov in questioning said that he didn't give any grasses to the woman Avdiushka. He heals babies and livestock using only incense that he ties onto them and puts in water to drink. But in the case record in his previously recorded testimony it is written that he said that he healed babies and some adults by saying incantations over water and salt, and he gave that mixture to them to drink, but now he says he confessed to those things and slandered himself, being unable to withstand the torture. Actually, he says, he healed babies and livestock only by using incense, and without any incantations.

And in further examination the cunning man (*znat'*) Sereshka was tortured hard and burned with fire.

Testimony of the woman Avdiushka, taken under torture

And the woman Avdiushka was tortured to determine whether she … sent a package [of bewitched grasses] with Sereshka and whether she plotted with Osip Laptev.

And Avdiushka was tortured hard and burned with fire, and with torture and fire she still did not confess, and she maintained that she had said all those things against herself and against Sereshka Borov slanderously, by the instruction of the bailiff Sereshka Terentev. She says she didn't get any grasses from Sereshka and she didn't send her son Sidorko to the peasant woman Olenka. She doesn't know what kind of shrieking torment possessed Olenka.

Testimony of Osip Laptev and his complaint about violation of judicial process

And Osip Laptev said in questioning that in the past year 1670 on the Monday of Holy Week, his brother Ivan Laptev was in his home and he, Osip, brought him some beer, but that beer didn't have any grass or powder in it. In the beer there were only some crushed hop buds and feathery bits of hops that were not deliberately added. When he brought the beer to his brother, his brother saw that powder in it, blew on it, and showed him that there were buds and feathers of hops in it. And his brother Ivan left the house and on the street announced that Osip had poisoned him with beer with grasses added to it.

Then his brother Ivan turned in some written spells (*pis'ma*) in [to the authorities with his complaint] about the matter. His brother Ivan brought those spells to him back in the past, in 1654/55, in Smolensk when they were in service there. At that time, he, Osip, [copied] those spells and then gave them back to his brother Ivan. And he said that until his brother Ivan brought those spells to the town hall and denounced him without basis for bewitchment (*v porche*), he kept them at his home. Some of those spells, he said, are to ward off the devil (*zaklinanye ot nakhozhdeniia diavol'skogo*) and others are against fever. He remembers when he copied them out, but he personally has done nothing with them. And he relied on the good word of those living near him to confirm in the general investigation that he,

Osip, is a good man, and that he keeps no demonic (*vrazheskii*) writings, and that he, Osip, has not bewitched anyone and keeps no grasses or roots and has never given such things to anyone.

And as part of this interrogation process, Osip Laptev should have been set in face-to-face confrontation with his brother Ivan, but he was not given a confrontation with his brother because Governor Dementei Tarbeev and the clerk Grigorei Oshitkov didn't send Ivan Laptev to be questioned.

And Osip Laptev was brought to torture and questioned again about the bewitchment of his brother Ivan with grasses and roots and writings.

With torture, Osip retracts his claim of innocence and his charges against his brother

And in questioning with torture, he, Osip, said that he had lied when he said that he copied the writings from his brother Ivan. He admitted that he copied those letters in Smolensk Province in Dukhovshchino in 1663/64 or 1664/65 from a Belorussian priest, … from a book. What the priest was named, he doesn't know, but his nickname was "Amen." And that priest was of average height, dryish (*sukhovat soboiu*), with red hair, clean shaven. His brother Ivan stole those letters [from him] in 1668/69, along with other documents and contracts. Those spells were to ward off the devil and for protection from fever. He, Osip, never did anything with those writings and never healed anyone and never gave them to anyone. And he didn't bewitch his brother, Ivan, and didn't give him beer poisoned with grasses, and he doesn't know anything about grasses or roots that are used for bewitchment.

Withstanding torture, Sereshka Borov retracts his earlier confession

And Sereshka Borov was tortured and with torture said that he had slandered himself by confessing in his earlier testimony that he healed babies and livestock by saying incantations over water and salt. He uses only incense, without any incantations, in his healing practice. And about his

sons: Grishka lives in the Moscow region on his master's patrimonial estate, and Iliushka died in 1671/72.

The bailiff Sereshka Terentev denies torturing the peasant woman Avdiushka and her son on the master's estate without official permission to do so

Andrei Bezobrazov's man Sereshka Terentev (*the bailiff*) was found for questioning and was interrogated, and in interrogation Sereshka Terentev said: In May of 1670, Andrei Bezobrazov's peasant Ofonka Kuznets petitioned about the bewitchment of his wife, saying that his wife was bewitched and that she was crying out against the peasant woman Avdiushka and against her daughter Fekolka, and against Sereshka Borov and against Sereshka's son Iliushka. In response to Ofonka's petition, he, Sereshka, questioned the woman Avdiushka and her son Sidorko about the bewitchment. He questioned them orally but did not torture them or torment them. And her son Sidorko said that his mother Avdiushka sent grass with him, Sidorko, to Olenka and told her to put it in food, but that woman Olenka had been possessed even before that for a month and more. And the woman Avdiushka in questioning didn't confess anything.

(*Sereshka Terentev continued:*) In response to Ivan Laptev's denunciation and petition, Governor Dementei Tarbeev and the clerk Grigorii Oshitkov ordered him to send Avdiushka and her son Sidorko and daughter Fekolka, and Sereshka Borov and his son Iliushka to Kostroma. But what they said there in questioning, he, Sereshka, doesn't know. He accompanied them only as far as Kostroma. Avdiushka's daughter Fekolka and Seresha's son Iliushka were released with surety bonds. And Fekolka died the next year and Iliushka died in 1671/72, but the woman Olenka continued to shriek even after that date.

The peasant suspects and witnesses are held in Kostroma under guard

And after questioning, the bailiff Sereshka Terentev was sent to Kostroma to the administrative office, and Oska Laptev and Sereshka Borov and the

woman Avdiushka [were held] as previously in the prison of disgrace (*v opal'nuiu tiurmu*) in the Kostroma administrative office [and guarded by] the Kostroma gentryman Tereshka Shestinskoi.

A general search and investigation are carried out in the vicinity of the Laptev estate

And the Kostroma gentryman Tereshka Shestinskoi and town square clerk Savka Grigorev and a musketeer from the town of Iaroslavl, Trifanko Titov, were sent to carry out a general search around where Osip Laptev and Sereshka Borov live, and they were ordered to investigate and search to determine whether Osip Laptev bewitched his brother with beer poisoned with grass on the Monday of Holy Week in 1670, and whether he kept any criminal letters or grasses or roots for bewitchment or for any evil intent (*ko vsiakomu zlodeistvu*)….

1672: Governor Ivan Anichkov reports from Kostroma about competing orders from Moscow that divide his time and attention

To the Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, your slave Ivashko Anic hkov petitions. In the past year 1671 on September 21, you sent your order that said to send men out from Iaroslavl to Kostroma to find the involved parties and to interrogate them violently with torture (*s pristrastiem*) and give them a direct confrontation among themselves and investigate that criminality with all kinds of inquiries firmly and follow the investigation wherever it leads. (*The order said:*) Torture anyone who is implicated harshly and burn them with fire in order to discover the truth in that investigation. And after I completed the investigation, I was to prepare a full, truthful report in that matter, and send the final report to you, Great Sovereign, to Moscow to the Military Chancellery. And in the past year 1671 on October 31, another one of your great sovereign's decrees and an order were sent from the Chancellery of the Great Court under the seal of the state secretary Iakov Petelin to Iaroslavl to me, your slave, and I was ordered to go to your great sovereign's court district in Iurevets Povolskoi and all of Iurevsk Province to conduct a census (*perepiski*) and inspection (*dozora*).

In obedience to that decree and order, I, your slave, went to Iurevets Povolskoi and to your sovereign court district for census-taking and having carried out the inspection and recorded everything in a book, I sent it to you, Great Sovereign, to Moscow to the Chancellery of the Great Court on April 26.

June–October 1672: Bureaucratic snafus and pressing local matters delay the case

And in this year 1672 on October 15, another decree from the Military Chancellery was sent under the seal of State Secretary Petr Kovelin to Iaroslavl to Governor Grigorii Mikhailovich Anichkov, and that decree was written on June 7, 1672, but where that decree was held up along the way is unknown. And according to that decree, Governor Grigorii Mikhailovich Anichkov was again instructed, as already stated in your earlier orders, to send me, your slave, Ivashka Anichkov, to Kostroma for investigation of the denunciation and petition of Ivan Laptev against his brother Osip Laptev for criminality and heresy and written spells (*zagovornye pis'ma*) without any delay. But I, your slave, have still not as of this date gone to Kostroma to investigate because now a murder has taken place in Iaroslavl Province. Someone murdered the Iaroslavl landowner Andrei Ivanovich Butrimov, and in the investigation it turned out that his household man (*dvorovoi chelovek*) murdered him. Without your sovereign order, I, your slave, cannot leave and go to Kostroma without having investigated that matter fully. There is no one else I can send to Iaroslavl. The *gubnoi starosta* (*official in charge of policing banditry in the region*) Petr Petlan has been sent to Iaroslavl and other provinces for investigation of banditry (*so he is not available for the job*). Sovereign, send me your order and tell me what to do.

9.3 A CASE OF SATANIC LOVE MAGIC (AVDOTIA BORISOVA, 1733)

Source: RGADA, f. 1183, op. 1, d. 414 (1733), ll. 2 ob.–3; 5 ob.–10 ob., 1–1 ob., 14 ob.–15; reprinted in Elena B. Smilianskaia, *Volshebniki, bogokhul'niki, eretiki: Narodnaia religioznost'i "dukhovnye prestupleniia" v Rossii XVIII vv.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003): 177–79. We are grateful to Smilianskaia for sharing her commentary with us.

In December 1733, Artemii Ivanov, the elder of the village Morgusha, informed his noble landlady, Marfa Iakovlevna Buturlina, of magic afoot in his village. He filed a denunciation and handed in as evidence "an obscene impious document," a diabolical love charm that the peasant woman Avdotia Borisova had perhaps inadvertently kept in her possession. All of the participants in the case were questioned by ecclesiastics in the Moscow Synodal Office before being turned over to the Criminal Investigative Chancellery. The story–full of passion, desire, longing, and betrayal–speaks for itself in the testimony that follows.

In spite of the skepticism "witchcraft" was supposed to elicit from judges, in keeping with Anna Ioannovna's 1731 decree against sorcery and witchcraft (see Document 3.16), the Holy Synod's findings in the case of Avdotia and Stepan Borisov still acknowledged the possible efficacy of love charms and of witchcraft more generally. The Synod's convoluted thinking displays considerable internal inconsistency and palpable ambivalence: although they know they are not supposed to believe in magic, they find the circumstantial evidence mighty suspicious. Such a ruling was not an exception to the rule. The extant materials demonstrate that regardless of rank, status, or gender, in the eighteenth century and even later, people frequently continued to understand the torments of love as the product of evil designs and magic. Elena B. Smilianskaia notes how Avdotia's testimony shows a young woman genuinely befuddled at her own obsession and seemingly relieved to find an explanation in the love charm.[7] The readiness of all parties to attribute disorderly passions to external causes parallels the widespread understanding of possession as a state inflicted by malevolent external agents. Without attempting to psychoanalyze these historical actors or to apply anachronistic diagnoses to their situations, we can note with interest their tendency to externalize emotional states and physical conditions that we have come to understand as interior.

This case could easily fit in the chapter on love magic, but the repeated allusions to Satan in the spell make it relevant here. Far from a satanic pact, like some of the others in this chapter, it suggests a kind of satanic afterthought. The focus of the spell is clearly on sparking desire, not on compacting with the devil. The spell itself, however, deliberately evokes a world of inversion, where the daily rituals of Orthodox life–crossing and blessing–are negated, and even normal routines (exiting through the door and the gate) are subverted. These negations, like invocations of devils, are common in surviving spells, although as we have seen elsewhere in this collection, references to holy figures and pious gestures are equally common.

The spell also makes one of the earliest references to the elderly witch Baba Yaga, a figure who became a staple of Russian folklore. Another early reference appears in a

1728 denunciation of a priest for composing and writing incantations, one of which is addressed to Baba Yaga.[8] The earliest pictorial representations of Baba Yaga show her clothed in somewhat androgynous garments, as seen in Figure 11. The later woodblock print in Figure 12 (which the nineteenth-century art historian D. A. Rovinskii suggests dates approximately to the mid-eighteenth century)[9] is the only one we have discovered that presents her in a state of semi-undress with pendulous breasts. This more sexualized imagery parallels some of the ribald tales about Baba Yaga recorded by nineteenth-century folklorists. It also echoes visual tropes of earlier Orthodox imagery, particularly in the Ukrainian regions, that depicted female witches alongside women fornicators writhing naked in the torture chambers of Hell, as in Figure 13. The sexualized portrayal of Baba Yaga may also evince the influence of Western pornographic literature in the eighteenth century or of the sexualized depictions of witches that had long circulated in Catholic and Protestant Europe. Regardless of any Western influences, however, the degree to which this bare-breasted witch conforms to Orthodox iconographic conventions is striking.

Also innovative and noteworthy is the confluence of imagery here. In a combination long familiar in the West but novel in an Orthodox Slavic context, the female sexual sinner and the witch have come together to incarnate female power and danger. Eventually, the Baba Yaga of Russian and Ukrainian folklore becomes fleshed out as an old hag who lives in a hut elevated on chicken legs and who steals and eats children, the East Slavic version of the cannibalistic witch in the Grimms' fairytale of "Hansel and Gretel."

Figure 11: "Baba Yaga Battles the Crocodile," a *lubok* print from the first quarter of the eighteenth century from D. A. Rovinskii, *Russkiia narodnyia kartinki* (St. Petersburg: Ekspeditsiia zagotovleniia gos. bumag, 1881). Slavic and East European Collections, The New York Public Library. "Baba Iaga deretsia s krokodilom." New York Public Library Digital Collections. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-0b03-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99. Public domain.

The denunciation: Artemii Ivanov's testimony in Moscow's Synodal Office

Artemii Ivanov, around forty years of age, was born in the village of Morgusha; he is a serf, is married, and has no record of acting contrary to church teachings. In December 1733, he informed his landlady of the existence of a strange piece of paper: "His brother, the peasant Ivan Ivanov of the very same village, had that paper, and this year just before the Feast of the Assumption of the Virgin (*August 15*)—on which day and in which month he can't remember—Ivan informed Semen Fedorov Panov, the scribe of the same estate, and him, Artemii, about this piece of paper. Ivan

told them that Stepan Borisov Filippov, the clerk of the same village, gave it to him that same year, but in which month and on what day, he didn't say. And he said that Stepan told him, Ivan, to take care of the paper. Ivan has had it for some time now, but he doesn't know what kind of document it is because he isn't literate, and he didn't learn its contents from Stepan. And in this very year, Ivan married the peasant maiden Avdotia Borisova of the same village, and after having lived with him three weeks, she gave birth to a baby boy who lived only three weeks. His wife is always grieving for the baby, and Ivan has repeatedly asked his wife with whom she had begot that child out of wedlock and why she is always melancholy. In response to his numerous queries his wife said that as a maiden she became pregnant with that child after fornicating with the clerk's son Stepan Borisov and to this day she always yearns for him and cannot forget him for some reason. After hearing this, Ivan remembered that it was Stepan who had given him the piece of paper and ordered him to take care of it. Fearing an investigation, Ivan produced the paper for the bailiff Panov and the elder so that they could read it.

Figure 12: "Baba Yaga Battles the Crocodile," a mid-eighteenth-century *lubok* print from D. A. Rovinskii, *Russkiia narodnyia kartinki* (St. Petersburg: Ekspeditsiia zagotovleniia gos. bumag, 1881). Slavic and East European Collections, The New York Public Library. "Baba Iaga deretsia s krokodilom." New York Public Library Digital Collections. http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47de-0b04-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99. Public domain.

The interrogation of Stepan Borisov, January 10, 1734, before members of the Moscow Synodal Office

Stepan Borisov was twenty-two years old, had been married for eight years, and had two daughters ages four and one and a half; he went to confession and communion each year and was not known for sorcery and heresy. He acknowledged that the witchcraft document was in his handwriting and that he had written it six years ago, but exactly in what year, month, and on what day he cannot remember, only that it was in the summer on the day of the

feast of the Kazan Mother of God, when he was at the market in the village Palitsy in Nizhnii Novgorod District. He was in the village inn with another peasant, whose name he doesn't know, when the peasants Ivan Borisov and Avram Ivanov of the same village Magrusha asked him to write down a letter that would be dictated by a man they would bring to him, but they didn't tell him what type of letter this was, the man's social station, or where the man came from. In response he, Stepan, said that he could write it down. Then the three men left the inn for the market. When they came to a vegetable garden, Avram Ivanov told him and Ivan to wait for him, while he went to fetch the man with the paper. Where he went, Stepan doesn't know. He was gone half an hour. Then he came through the vegetable garden and he brought some very old man with him, and he told him, Stepan, to write down what the old man said. He, Stepan, said that he was ready to do so but didn't have an inkpot with him. Ivan Borisov went off in search of one. He didn't say where he had gone, but he came back in a short while with an inkpot in hand. Then he, Stepan, sat on the ground with the old man and wrote down the man's words; he wasn't aware of the old man having any text [from which he might dictate] with him. The old man said that he, Stepan, was to write the names of whomever he wanted. Without any particular design in mind and out of ignorance, he wrote down his own name, Stepan, and the name Avdotia, which readily came to him at that time, as well as the words that the old man dictated to him. Then he, Stepan, gave that paper and also the inkpot to Ivan Borisov, and all four men went together to the market. Having bought a pail of homemade beer, Avram Ivanov, Ivan Borisov, and he, Stepan, drank together, after which they fetched their horses. All of them returned to the village the next day.

Figure 13: Witches in Hell (Drohobych, Ukraine): This detail of sinners in Hell from a late sixteenth-century Ukrainian Last Judgment icon shows two varieties of witches (*ved'ma*, center, sitting on a crouching man and bearing a bucket on her head; and *charovnitsa*—bottom row, second from the left, again with a bucket on her head). Both have uncovered hair, suggesting a connection between sex and witchcraft in a Ukrainian context. The connection is emphasized by the pendulous serpents that hang from the breasts of the *charovnitsa* at the bottom left. The common visual association of loose hair and snakes with sexual sin is further confirmed by the presence of far more dramatically sinuous snakes attached to the breasts of the wild-haired infanticidal woman (*detogubitsa*) to the left of the ved'm, guilty of killing babies conceived in adultery or fornication. The buckets atop the witches' heads are identified in other icons as milk buckets, and the sinners that carry them are sometimes labeled "milk destroyers." This serves as a nice visual reminder of the

importance of milk and milk magic in Ukrainian witch lore. Other sinners sharing the witches' spot in Hell include a dancer, decked out in fancy dress toward the bottom tier in the center, and a miller, identifiable by the grist wheel hanging about his neck, right above the *ved'ma*, top center. Icon (tempera on pine), Drohobych, Lviv oblast, 1685, 211.5x132 cm, National Museum in Lviv (2523/I-1978), reproduced in Liliya Berezhnaya and John-Paul Himka, *The World to Come: Ukrainian Images of the Last Judgment* (Cambridge, MA: Ukrainian Research Institute and Harvard University Press, 2014), Fig. "145. Drohobych—National Museum. Hell," 182. Detail reproduced with the permission of the photographer, John-Paul Himka. Also reprinted with permission © 2014 by the President and Fellows of Harvard College.

Stepan also testified that he began to fornicate with Avdotia two and a half years ago and described how they went one day to the forest to pick berries. When they were alone together, he took hold of her, started to caress her, and told her that he wanted to have sex with her. He committed fornication out of a lack of self-restraint rather than any witchcraft. And he had not forced the maiden Avdotia to fornicate; rather they had done so out of mutual consent.

Interrogation of the thirty-three-year-old serf Ivan Ivanov

He married Avdotia Borisova in 1733, fully aware that she was pregnant. His wife was always pining, and he, Ivan, repeatedly asked her with whom she begot that child out of wedlock and why she was always grieving. And she responded to his many requests that as a maiden she had lived in sin with the clerk's son Stepan Borisov and that she still always yearns for Stepan for some reason and cannot forget him. He found the scrap of paper among his wife's possessions in her dowry chest.

Interrogation of twenty-three-year-old Avdotia Borisova

Three years ago, for some reason she began to long for Stepan Borisov, a peasant of their village. She constantly tried to gaze upon him, and when she couldn't, she became miserable. When she happened to see Stepan alone, she told him that she had such longing for him but didn't know why that was. And Stepan said that if she fornicated with him, the longing would go away. She told him that she was afraid of doing so out of fear of getting pregnant, because she had never had sex with anyone before Stepan. And he enticed her with words, telling her that she had nothing to fear and there

would be no children. And so she agreed to have sex with him, but they couldn't find a convenient time. Then two and half years ago, she went to the forest with her other unmarried sisters to gather berries and Stepan went with them. When she found herself with Stepan alone in the forest, she told him how wretched she felt because of him, and Stepan repeated that she would be cured if she had sex with him. And although she was ready to give into him at that time, she was afraid to do it in the forest, in case someone discovered them. She told him that after he left the forest in the evening, he should go to the threshing barn behind their fence. And they fornicated at the mill and thereafter in various places at various times, whenever they found themselves alone. She had sex with him repeatedly, and she lived in sin with him for a year and a half, but she didn't tell her spiritual confessor during confession. And then she became pregnant. When Stepan learned that she was pregnant, he abandoned her for some reason.

Her father quickly married her off, and three weeks after the wedding she gave birth to a son. When her husband asked her the father's identity, she named Stepan Borisov and said that she still pined for Stepan and could not forget him, even now.

The incantation written on the scrap of paper: (*a copy of the original missive was retained in the Synodal archival file*)

Lord God, Heavenly Christ!

Hearken, Satan and Devil, I shall conjure on salt and shall cast charms. Not blessing myself, not crossing myself, I shall leave the hut not by the door, I shall leave the courtyard not by the gates, but I shall go into the open fields to the ocean-sea. On the ocean-sea stands an iron hut and in that hut stands a copper stove, in that stove burn ash branches, flame on flame, bright on bright. So let the white body and the fervent heart and the clear eyes of the slave Avdotia burn and seethe for the slave Stepan, by day and by midday, by night and by midnight, at the morning sunrise and at the evening sunset, and by the old moon and by the new moon. And let her pine and long for him, let her forget her father and mother, let her abandon kith and kin, and may she never tire of speaking of me, your slave.

Satan and the Devil are sitting on the stove, and I submit and bow to them. O, greetings to you, Satan and Devil, do me this kindness, fashion me some love, possess her white body, her fervent heart, and her clear eyes, by day and by midday, by night and by midnight, and let her not dispel my magic spell with drink or food, nor walk nor sleep it off, and let her long for me, your slave Stepan, by day and by midday, by night and by midnight.

> On the ocean-sea lies a white, hot stone; on the white, hot stone sits Yaga Baba, the old one. O greetings to you, old Baba Yaga. Take tongs and iron and cause the slave Avdotia's innards and her bowels to torment her by day and by midday, by night and by midnight, at the morning sunrise and at the evening sunset, and let her not dispel my magic spell with drink or food, nor walk nor sleep it off, and let her long for me, your slave Stepan.

O greetings to you, the demon Poluekht! Possess the white body and the fervent heart of the slave Avdotia. Make her gaze with clear eyes upon the old moon and the new moon, and may your slave Stepan appear more beautiful to her than the beauteous sun and her father and mother and kith and kin.

The Synod's ruling

We hereby acknowledge that this writing raises substantial suspicion of provoked fornication. Furthermore, the woman Avdotia testifies that she is despondent over him, Stepan, and cannot forget him. That indecent scrap of paper contains an exact reference to that despondency. Although those utterances cannot be duly acknowledged as efficacious, the indecent manner in which they are written provides substantial proof of their ungodliness and raises suspicion of sorcery.

(In February 1734, the Synodal officials transferred Avdotia and "the adulterer and blatant sorcerer Stepan Borisov" to the Investigative Chancellery for further investigation and released the others. The final ruling from the secular court has not yet been found.)

9.4 A PACT WITH THE DARK-VISAGED MASTER OF THE HELLISH ABYSS AND HIS SERVANT DEMONS (HETMANATE, 1749)

Source: TsDIAK Ukrainy, f. 51, op. 3, spr. 9500, ark. 6, 12, 13 (1749). Translated from Ukrainian by Kateryna Dysa. We are grateful to Dysa for also sharing her transcription of the archival document with us.

Ivan Robota, the defendant in this mid-eighteenth century case, was charged with writing and signing a demonic pact in blood. The case was heard by a sequence of military courts and religious tribunals in the Hetmanate, which was under Russian rule but still maintained significant institutional and juridical autonomy at this time. Robota was initially questioned in the General Military Office in Hlukhiv, the administrative center of the Hetmanate, where he had worked as a scribe for three years. He was then turned over to the metropolitan of Kyiv for further questioning and ultimately dispatched to the general military court in Hlukhiv. All we know about him is that he had studied at the prestigious Kyiv Mohyla Academy, where he would have learned Latin and rhetoric. No doubt he found his work as a scribe copying texts rather tedious. The document below references the Russian empress Elizabeth Petrovna (r. 1741–61) but a scribe entered an incorrect date for her Majesty's order.

Not all of the original documents relating to the case have survived, but fortunately, a nineteenth-century historian, A. F. Kistiakovskii, found other relevant documents in the archive, including the final verdict, and published his findings. His article allows us to fill in the remainder of the story. After interrogating Robota, the military justices decided in August 1750 on their own authority to exile Robota to the Nekhvoroshchanskyi Monastery, within the area controlled by the Zaporozhian Cossacks, for a year of religious tutelage. A year later, the monastery released Rogota to the purview of the Poltava regimental office, which turned him over to the care of his father, Fedir Robota.[10]

To the metropolitan of the Kyivan Consistory and to the General Military Office

On November 6 of the current year, our metropolitan of the Kyivan Consistory listened to a report sent to him on October 18. It was a message to the General Military Office from Fedor Rudkovskyi, a Cossack from Hlukhiv, that included a demonic pact (*kartia demonam*) he had found. The charter was written and signed with blood in the Christian name and surname of Ivan Robota. These exact words were written on it: "He, Ivan Robota, entrusts his soul and body to the dark-visaged (*temnozrachnyi*) master of the hellish abyss and his servant demons, in return for which [the devil] will assist him, Ivan Robota, whenever he needs it."

Ivan Robota was interrogated in the General Military Office: he claims to know nothing about the pact, that he did not write it and that it is not his signature, and the handwriting does not even resemble his.

The General Military Office launched an investigation. After they heard Ivan Robota's interrogation, they ordered that the handwriting and signature on that pact be compared with other pieces transcribed by him

that are in the General Military Office's possession. They asked witnesses to study those pieces and to affix their signatures to their findings. There were six witnesses in total: Serhei Derhun, Stefan Iozefovych, Hryhoryi Dubovyk, Ivan Andirevskyi, Afanasyi Sluhanovskyi, and Peter Haliakhovskyi. They stated that they compared the above-mentioned letter, signed by Ivan Robota, with his other writings in the possession of the General Military Office, specifically with an investigation into a committee appeal of the case of (*the name was redacted*) from the Voronezh regiment that took place this year and also another case, both of which were written in his hand. According to their testimony, the handwriting on the found letter and signature on it are identical to the others.

In the second interrogation of the military office scribe Ivan Robota, he was questioned in the presence of gentlemen from the General Military Office about the particulars of the contract with the prince of demons and the signature written in blood. As stated in the report to the consistory and to the office of the Kyivan metropolitan, Ivan Robota answered in the interrogation that he never wrote a pact to the dark-visaged master of the hellish abyss and to his servant demons and didn't sign it with his blood. And he didn't know who wrote and signed his name to the pact that was sent to the General Military Office and the consistory, and he didn't know whose blood was used to sign it. And he, Ivan Robota, said that during his initial interrogation at the General Military Office he testified that he had written that contract and put his signature on it only because of the fear instilled in him by the members of that General Military Office, who threatened him during the interrogation. They threatened that he'd be severely beaten if he didn't say that he had written that contract. And they also said that his writing was similar to that of the compact.

By order of Her Imperial Majesty and by order of the metropolitan of the Kyiv Consistory, the consistory should return Ivan Robota to the General Military Office, so that office can figure out the reasons behind the contradictions in his testimonies. In accordance with Her Imperial Majesty's order, Ivan Robota was dispatched along with this report to the General Military Office. Her Imperial Majesty's order was dated 1729 [sic].

9.5 THE PRIEST MAKARII IVANOV AND OTHERS ARE CHARGED IN 1753 WITH POSSESSING BOOKLETS ABOUT SORCERY: A DEMONIC INCANTATION FOR LUST

Sources: RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 1754, l. 17; Gosudarstvennyi arkhiv Iaroslavskoi oblasti, f. 197, op. 1, d. 1753, ll. 38–41, 21, 28 ob.–29, 148–50 ob.; and A. L. Toporkov and A. A. Turilov, eds., *Otrechennoe chtenie v Rossii XVII–XVIII vekov* (Moscow: Indrik, 2002), 159–60. We are grateful to Elena B. Smilianskaia for sharing her transcription of the archival documents with us.

In 1753, investigators found Makarii Ivanov, a priest in the district of Poshekhone, Iaroslavl Province, to have in his possession various so-called black incantations (*chernye zagovory*, as in black magic), including one for inducing women to lust after him, two for influencing judges and others in authority, and two love charms. Along with the case report, here we produce only the first and most incriminating of the spells, the love charm in which he renounced his faith and bound himself to Satan. On August 28 of that year, the case came before the Secret Chancellery, which ordered that it be transferred to a regional religious institution, the Rostov Consistory, since it involved a cleric. Makarii Ivanov's testimony in the Secret Chancellery is somewhat confused and contradictory, which may have been the result of several torture sessions. As in Western Europe, it was not unusual for literate clerics to keep magical as well as religious texts in their possession. It would appear that poor Ivanov had been in search of a wife when he committed his grievous sin. He ended up incriminating two other clerics as well.

The interrogation of the accused, Makarii Ivanov, on September 29, 1753

Makarii Ivanov is twenty-four years old. He was ordained into the priesthood on April 4 of this year 1753…. The priest Makarii copied out an impious tract with incantations about six years ago. But he didn't ever use that tract to work any sorcery or divination or harm anyone at all. He wrote an incantation on the first and second pages of the tract that is meant to make members of the female sex inclined toward fornication and adultery

with him, because at that time, when he wrote the tract, he was still a bachelor and he wrote it down out of naiveté. He did not commit any actions or sorcery with that tract or remove his baptismal cross from his neck, as prescribed in the tract. He, Makarii, doesn't know whether the tract has any effect…. He explained how he understood the renunciation of God and how to force devils to serve him. He wrote, "The sea ocean stands on the ocean-sea of Buian's winds," and similar nonsense. He doesn't know what powers they have exactly.[11]

And Makarii Ivanov renounced God and bound himself to the devil with the understanding that Satan and his devils would serve him, Makarii, and would incline [women] to fornication and adultery, as it said in one of the spells. But he received no help at all of any kind from Satan and his devils, and he didn't summon them in any way except for copying out that spell, and other than that spell, he had entered no contract and didn't keep company with Satan and his devils. (*Note that Makarii's testimony is self-contradictory. He confesses to renouncing God and binding himself to the devil and also denies those acts. Adding to the confusion, at another point in his testimony, he claimed that even though he had not summoned Satan and kept no company with devils, he stopped going to confession and had not confessed for five years.*)

That same priest Makarii Ivanov continued to reply to interrogation about the "love spell" he copied. The questioning led to the words of the spell: "The sea-ocean stands in the ocean of the islands of Buian. On that island of Buian is the Mountain of Mountains. On that Mountain of Mountains is the tree of Buravo…." He answered as follows: It is written, "The sea-ocean stands. In the ocean-sea are the winds of Buian" and other nonsensical things, but what [the words are] exactly and whether they have any power, that he doesn't know.

(The priest Makarii Ivanov said that he had copied the text from one of the many booklets full of superstition and foul language that his brother, Stakhei Ivanov, had in his possession. He claimed that Stakhei had taken the texts from the sacristan Ivan Kuzmin.)

Search for and interrogation of Stakhei Ivanov

(The Rostov Consistory searched for Stakhei for a long time. It turned out he taught reading and writing to the children of the nobleman Ivan Andreev Leontev in the village of Staroe in Poshekhone District. He finally showed up on January 10, 1754, and was interrogated by the consistory the following day. When he appeared before the consistory, he was a twenty-three-year-old bachelor who lived with his father and two brothers and had not yet been ordained as a priest. Stakhei, in turn, implicated the sacristan Ivan Kuzmin: "In 1749, I was in the home of the sacristan Ivan Kuzmin…. He knows witchcraft and has tracts of incantations and witchcraft in his home." He also accused the priest Ivan Osipov of having similar writings and grasses for the magical fumigation [that is, enveloping in a supposedly curative haze of smoke] of livestock, to ward off evil spirits. Ultimately, the clerics were defrocked and sent to the civil courts.)

Incriminating evidence: Makarii Ivanov's incantation for fornication

I shall arise without blessing myself, and without crossing myself shall leave the hut not by the doors, I shall leave the yard not by the gates, and I shall go to an open field on a green sea to the tsar Satan himself, while thirty-three demons and three devils are arriving before his tsaritsa Satonitsa. And I, slave of God So-and-so, renounce faith in Christ and my father and mother and bind myself to you, Satan: accept me, slave of God So-and-so, and I am happy to serve and work for you and carry out your laws. And you will serve and work for me just as you serve your tsar Satan and your tsaritsa Satonitsa. Go to slave of God, the maiden So-and-so. Rouse her passions, tsaritsa, in her white body, black liver, and hot blood, and seventy-three veins (*or sinews*) and one vein and in the tendons behind her knees, so that she will lie and pine all day, at night, and in the morning, and just as a white cock trembles on the earth, so will she, slave of God So-and-so, tremble and pine for me, slave of God So-and-so, in daylight, night, and morning hours. And just as the stone Alatyr lies on the ocean-sea, when she doesn't see me or hear my voice, so will she lie and pine in the daylight, night, and morning hours, during a young, partial, or waning moon. And here is the key to the matter. There is the ocean-sea and on the ocean-sea is the stone Alatyr, but don't go there, and don't pull the sand out from the sea. On the heavenly tree is an apple, and … (*text unclear*). Let no one separate me, slave of God So-and-so, from her, neither with a cross nor with an amen. A:K:M:N:A:A.

This incantation is to be said over one's sweat, which should then be added to beer or vodka.

And the key to this matter is to be applied to this today and forever more and for all eternity, amen. This is how to decode the key, the acronym A:K:M:N:A:A.

*(In the manuscript in the original Russian the acronym code is A:Д:K:H:I:I. These are the first letters of the "key" as set out in the text: "**A** tomu **d**elu **k**liuch' **n**yne **i** prisno **i** vo veki vekov," that is, in translation, "**A**nd the **k**ey to this **m**atter is to be applied to this **t**oday **a**nd for ever more **a**nd for all eternity," leaving the initials:* A:K:M:N:A:A.")*

9.6 GOD-RENOUNCING LETTERS (1751): PERDUN

Sources: RGIA, f. 796, op. 32, d. 213, approx. 100 ll.; RGADA, f. 1183, op. 1, ch. 9, d. 175 (1751), 94 ll; reprinted in Smilianskaia, Volshebstvo, 98-101, 127-28. We are grateful to Smilianskaia for sharing her commentary with us.

The following investigation into the copying and circulation of "God-renouncing magical writing" is presented here as a summary of the case that is interspersed with a sprinkling of direct quotations from the sources. It depicts a world of men engaged in the exchange of spells. Tracing back across many decades, the testimony paints a picture of a world steeped in witchcraft, where healing and the diabolic were not far apart. Seeking health, wealth, and fame, the old peasant man known as Perdun, the ensign Krylov, and the peasant Smirnov energetically exchanged demonic texts, which, according to the trial transcript, "were filled with foul swear words and unspeakably horrid and abusive renunciations of God, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the archangels, angels, and all the saints." The texts themselves did not survive; court officials burned the originals, most likely out of fear of their power or from concern that they might get in trouble themselves for preserving such dangerous contraband. They may well have resembled other spells described as "God-renouncing," such as one recorded in another trial just two decades earlier, in 1730:

I, slave So-and-so, renounce my father and my mother and kin and clan and all the white earth, and with a true oath I swear allegiance and promise myself and attach myself with all of my thoughts, to you, my Creator and Tsar Soton (Satan), and to all of your diabolical saints, and to all of your affairs and covenants, and I swear to be a son to you and a saint, I, slave So-and-so.[12]

Without the complete wording of the spells in Perdun's case, it is not clear whether they included such a specific and complete oath of allegiance to Satan, but nonetheless, with their renunciation of all that was considered holy, they fit an undeniably diabolical pattern. The documents' latent power would be activated only when signed in blood, a dark practice that underscores their demonic nature.

The spells and rituals worked by Perdun and Krylov point to the complicated interrelations of what we might label medical and spiritual conditions. The peasant Mikhail Smirnov sought treatment for demonic visitations and visions, which he and those around him understood as by-products of his struggles with alcoholism.

The case starts and ends abruptly, and Krylov's testimony shifted mid-stream, so it is hard to pin down what happened with any precision. The old man Perdun's description of the way he learned his healing skills from his father matches patterns of transmission seen in other cases as well, as does the fact that the father handed down to his son not only his knowledge and techniques but also the particular stalks of grass that the son continued to use some six decades later. The flow of magical words and knowledge back and forth between written and oral forms, between literate and illiterate users and practitioners, also follow patterns seen in many other cases.

Smirnov and Krylov both made confessions. Although Perdun acknowledged his connection to Smirnov, he denied Krylov's accusations. Krylov was dispatched to the War College as a very serious criminal, and his God-renouncing writings were burned. During the course of the investigation, perhaps after having refused to make a religious confession and take communion, the elderly Perdun died. It seems the peasant Mikhaila Smirnov was released, although no documentation survives to attest to this.

Interrogation of Petr Krylov

In 1751, the thirty-three-year-old quartermaster Petr Krylov, the son of a petty noble and ensign, said that he had written out spells in which he renounced God (literally, God-denying letters, *bogootmetnye pis'ma*) so that he would become "rich and noble" (*bogatyi i znatnyi*) and that he had learned them from the eighty-year-old Nizhnii Novgorod peasant Andrei, Timofei Chermnov's son, nicknamed Perdun. Mikhaila Smirnow, a Nizhnii Novgorod peasant, introduced Krylov to Perdun. Perdun had treated Smirnov for diabolic visions (*d'iavol'skie videniia*) that evidently occurred from frequent drunkenness. That is why Mikhaila Smirnov said the following to Krylov about Perdun: "That man is my great benefactor! A diabolic force had completely overcome and tortured me, and Perdun removed that diabolic force from me."

Perdun told him, Krylov, "If you wish, I can make you wealthy and noble: you only need to renounce Christ, the Mother of God, and all the saints and

give yourself over to the devil and write a text to that effect." Krylov invited Perdun and Smirnov to a tavern. They went together, and after entering the tavern, they drank vodka and other drinks. Perdun again told him, Krylov, to write the text, and he, Krylov, gave in and told Perdun that he was ready to write it. Leaving Smirnov behind in the tavern, Perdun took Krylov to an empty eatery. Taking a piece of paper and ink out of his pocket, Krylov wrote down Perdun's words. Perdun told him to sign it with his blood when he needed it, and he told Krylov, "Once you sign it, they (*i.e., the demons*) will come in human form with money for you and will take the document from you." Later Krylov changed his testimony, saying that "having taken a needle from the collar of his caftan, Perdun pierced the skin of the top joint of the little finger of Krylov's left hand until it bled and ordered him to write in blood on that document: 'I, Petr, am signing with my own hand.' "

Then Krylov started to say that actually Perdun wasn't the one who taught him how to write the pact, rather it was his fellow soldier Smolin. After the pact failed to work, Krylov complained to Smolin that the demons had not shown up after. Smolin then took him to an empty and abandoned former eatery not too far from the tavern and told him that when Krylov wrote down Smolin's words in the initial text, he, Smolin, had been drunk. Because of his inebriation, he had made an error in the words he gave Krylov, and when Krylov read the text out loud, the devil did not appear because of that mistake. Krylov said that Smolin told him to write another four copies and to sign some with blood from the little finger on his left hand. He ordered him to read one of the documents signed with blood out loud and to throw one of the unsigned ones into the whirlpool by the mill. And he told him: "If you throw the document into the whirlpool, the devil will appear before you in human guise and will bring you money."

(When the interrogators tried to find Smolin, they learned that he was dead. Krylov quickly started to blame Andrei Perdun again, asserting that Andrei "releases terrors upon him, Krylov, at night by and appears to him in his dreams.")

The interrogation of Andrei Perdun

The eighty-year-old Nizhnii Novgorod peasant Andrei, son of Timofei Chermnov, with the nickname Perdun, said the following: "He, Perdun, was taught by his father, the peasant Timofei Kuzmin, under the following circumstances: when his father was alive, he helped a lot of people who suffered from demonic fits by saying words of enchantment (*nagovornye rechi*) over water. He then gave them the water to drink and that chased away the demonic powers. Seeing that his father was able to deliver many people from demonic powers with those words and many people summoned him to them for help, he asked his father to teach him that skill. In response, his father, three years before his death, taught Andrei the enchanted words. He taught him orally since he, Andrei, was not literate, and he gave him ten stalks of the grass called Adam's Head.[13] He, Perdun, doesn't know where his father got the grass or where it grows. His father told him to tie it onto people who were seized by demonic forces (*diavol'skaia sila*). Perdun said that he didn't pass it on to his own son. He never taught his son the enchanted words or how to tie the grass onto either people or livestock. He did admit to knowing a love charm that the monk Feofan allegedly taught him: "Father Satan, send the dark demon of the night and also your light demon of the morning; Father Satan, send these demons to charm the male slave or female slave So-and-so into committing fornication."

The interrogation of Mikhaila Smirnov

(Mikhaila Smirnov, an inhabitant of Nizhnii Novgorod, suffered from excessive drinking and troublesome visions in his dreams. In an effort to rid himself of the nightmares that tormented him, he prayed before icons and even took up residence with the priest who was his spiritual father.)

He hoped, while living with that priest, to free himself from those apparitions and from fear. In response to that request the priest brought Mikhaila to his own home and read holy books over him.

(The nightmares, though, persisted, both when Mikhaila was in the priest's home and even when he prayed in church.)

(*In one of these nightmares*) a multitude of people appeared. Armed with wooden fence posts, they surrounded the hut and shouted in strange voices

that Mikhaila should be dragged outside. Afterward, taking on the images of his acquaintances, they looked in his window and said: "Enough of these prayers to God, Mikhaila, let's go to the market."

(*Mikhaila left the priest's home healed. But later, it seems, the memory of those dreadful nightmares returned to him when he was in a tavern one day. He told the peasant Perdun about the dreams, and Perdun readily came up with a diagnosis.*) "In the dreams you describe a diabolical power that comes to you when you are drunk, and you had best abandon excessive drinking. If this happens to you again, then send for me and I shall drive that diabolical power out of you." Indeed, a year later, "that same nightmare occurred and such fear came upon" the delirious Smirnov that he rushed to the priest's home and from there sent his son to fetch the sorcerer Perdun, who visited him at the priest's home and called for water. After dipping into the tin beaker and turning away from Mikhaila, he whispered over that water for a minute. Mikhaila does not know and did not hear what he whispered, because Perdun whispered very quietly. Then, turning to Mikhaila, Perdun ordered Mikhaila to cross himself, and after Mikhaila had crossed himself, Perdun drank the water from his own hands. Then he tied a small bunch of herbs to the cord on which Mikhaila wore the life-giving cross. Demanding no payment from Mikhaila for this, he left the priest's household. After drinking the water and chanting prayers, Mikhaila was freed from the nightmares and fears. After he had whispered over the water, Perdun returned to Mikhaila's home and said: "Pray unto God, and they, of course, shall henceforth never again appear." For that promise and even more for what he had previously wrought, Mikhaila gave Perdun some beer to drink.

9.7 CASE OF THE SOLDIER SEMEN POPOV, WHO RENOUNCED GOD AND GAVE HIS SOUL TO THE DEVIL (1759)

Source: RGADA f. 7, Preobrazhenskii prikaz, op. 1, ed. khr. 1917, 16 ll. The dramatic title that appears above was added to the archival manuscript in the nineteenth century. The Faustian model was less fully entrenched in Russia in the eighteenth century, and such a title would not have been applied, even in a case such as this where it is fully apt.

The case of the soldier Semen Popov opens up a window onto the kinds of desperation that could drive an Orthodox Christian to attempt to sell his soul to the devil. The son of a humble provincial priest, Popov took monastic vows and entered the clergy. He soon caught the eye of ecclesiastical officials and rose rapidly through the ranks. His promising upward trajectory, however, took a sudden downward turn when he fell into drinking and squandered his patron's good will. Stripped of monastic status, he found himself drafted for life as a common soldier in the imperial army, a fate so terrible that he tried to invoke the devil as a way out. When his efforts failed to pay off—the devil never showed up to keep his side of the bargain—Popov repented of his blasphemous action and turned himself in to the authorities. Or at least, that was how he told the story. The case record suggests that he may not have come forward voluntarily; rather he was arrested for theft and desertion as well as drunken and disorderly conduct.

Along with the issues of a satanic pact and common criminal conduct, Popov raised a matter of "the sovereign's word," that category of crime involving any word uttered or deed plotted against the sovereign, her family or government. According to the oaths of loyalty administered to the population (see the documents in 2.10), subjects were duty-bound to report any such disloyalty or treason to the sovereign's courts. In practice, however, as seen in Documents 4.8, 9.2, and 10.4, those caught up in the criminal justice system might announce that they knew of such an infraction as a tactic to ensure their case would be kicked up to the central courts. In addition, and maybe more significantly, their punishment would be delayed as the case wended its way through the courts. Popov's declaration that he "has" knowledge of a matter involving the sovereign's word smacks of this kind of strategic stalling. The fact that suspected sorcerers occasionally took advantage of what we might call a "treason loophole" has led some scholars to overestimate the connection between witchcraft and treason.

Popov's account, though drily narrated, is full of pathos. The actual satanic pact, written in his own blood, adds a ghoulish note to the file. It also serves as an important reminder that the notion of selling one's soul to the devil could function as more than a literary or theological trope. Still well into the eighteenth century, the possibility of renouncing Christ and binding oneself to the devil appeared to offer a real—if dangerous—alternative to enduring a grim life passively. Occasionally a miserable soul like Popov attempted to follow that path.

The translation here has been slightly reordered for comprehensibility.

March 27, 1759

This dutiful petition was submitted in the Chancellery of Secret Investigative Matters in the Kronshtadt Garrison Chancellery.

> In the past 1758 year on December 20, a God-denying letter written in his own hand to the devil (*diavolu*) by a soldier of the garrison regiment, Semen Popov, was presented to the honorable Lieutenant General Cavalier, Member of the State War College and of the Senate, High-commander (*Oberkamennant*) Ivan Ivanovich Kostiurin for his perusal. By resolution of His Excellency it was forwarded to me that same December with orders to send Popov's God-denying letter, written by him and addressed to the devil, to the holy fathers in the Petersburg Ecclesiastical Consistory for examination and reading in accordance with the rules of the holy fathers in the Petersburg Consistory and the 4,987th article.

[Popov] had been sent [to me] in the custody of a soldier of the same Dementiev regiment on December 15 for reporting sick and for running away from his regiment, for which he was caught, and also for the theft of a sewn sleeve and trousers from Soldier Zhanyn, and for appearing drunk in the garrison. And he was sent [to the consistory] that same December on the twenty-sixth with a convoy.

(*Popov and the records of his investigation were sent*) to His Excellency Silvester, archbishop of the Petersburg Consistory, along with the judgment rendered by His Excellency and a resolution concerning Popov's renunciation of God and his giving a God-denying letter to the devil. For penance he is to be given in trust to the Kronshtadt orderly of the Church of the Holy Apostle Andrew the First Called, and he is to be sent to study with Archpriest Aleksei Vasilev. And this day while held under guard, Popov reported an instance of "the Sovereign's word and deed" against Captain of the Guard Makarov.

Report on the investigation

Questions	**Answers**
1. You've been in the service of Her Imperial Majesty from what year, month, day?	I've been in service since 1753, January 1, in the city of Petersburg.
And what are your origins (what rank of people do you come from)?	I am the son of a priest.
And how many years of age are you?	I am twenty-eight years old.

2. Can you read and write?	Yes, I can read and write.
3. Do you know the oath to Her Imperial Majesty taken by those in service according to the Military Articles?	They were read to me, and I know the fines imposed.
4. And do you know about a case of treason (*slovo i delo*)?	I know about *slovo i delo* and can tell about it in the right place.

Popov's account of his background and how he reached this point in his life

On March 21 (or 27), 1759, Semen Popov was questioned:

He says he's thirty-eight, not twenty-eight.

His father was a sexton in the first Nizhnii Novgorod Diocese … on the estate of Prince Vasilii Golushin in Kurmyshsk Province.

In the past year 1733, in accordance with the decree of the Nizhnii Novgorod consistory to educate the Russian people to read and write in Russian and in Latin and so forth, he moved to another church institution and stayed there until 1740 and studied. And then in the same 1740 year, his father was appointed to the above-mentioned Nizhnii Novgorod Diocese by order of the [Petersburg] Consistory.

He was sent to the New Savior Monastic Seminary in Moscow to study in 1742, and he studied theology. And that same year by his own volition and to fulfill a vow he had taken, he, Semen, sent in a request to take monastic orders. He was sent to Archbishop Platon for questioning, and Platon sent him to another monastery, the stavropegic Holy Trinity Sergius Monastery (*in Sergiev Posad*) to Deputy-Governor Hieromonk (*that is, a monk who is also a priest*) Varsonofii with orders to let him be shorn as a monk.[14]

He became a monk with the monastic name Silvester, and then became a hieromonk in the past year of 1745. Then he was promoted with help from Archbishop Platon to be bursar to Metropolitan Rafail….[15]

Then he took a letter [and went] with his mother Marfa Afonasei's daughter from the village in Nizhnii Novgorod Province to St. Petersburg to his father, and he stayed with his father until 1752.

And in that year for drunkenness and disorderly conduct (*neporiadochnye postupki*) he was dismissed from the Petersburg Consistory to serve as a soldier with the Velikoustiugskii infantry regiment, and he stayed in that regiment until 1757. In that year, by his request he was transferred to the Kronshtadt garrison regiment where he remained. And in the past year 1758, in December, being on guard duty and wanting to receive wealth through the devil and through that wealth to get out of military service, he formulated a plan of renouncing God and giving himself to the devil. As a token of faith, he planned to give [the devil] a God-denying letter, which he wrote in the original in his own blood as he said in his first interrogation. And it all happened as he said.

Semen thought he could better himself through the devil. He thought he could gain wealth and through wealth get out of military service. And for that reason he decided to renounce God and give himself to the devil and as a token of faith to give him a god-denying letter which he deliberately composed and in that place, having cut himself with a knife on his right leg and let the blood form a little bubble, he wrote the God-denying letter as follows:

> Semen would go out to empty places to renounce Christ and call [the devil].
>
> *(written in a very rough hand)*
>
> I, slave of God Semen, renounce the Lord and the heavens and the earth and the saints of God and faith and the Church of God's faith, and I do not want to call myself a Christian. And thus I give myself in service to the devil and I obligate myself to do his will. In this letter I sign myself over to him.

I, slave Semen, renounce God the Creator and all created by his hand and deny him and give myself to you, Lord Devil, not only in my body but also in my soul. And even at the Coming of Christ who is called the Creator I will not be faithful to him, but I renounce Christianity. I, Semen, with my own hand signed.

And upon writing this letter he, Semen, went out to an empty place to read that letter and to call the devil to himself in order to get out of military service.

And he demanded wealth from him (*the devil*). But not only did the devil not come to him, but seeing that his letter had no effect at all, he wanted to

repent of his renunciation of God, and so he wanted to confess. The next day he brought [his confession] to the Kronshtadt Chancellery, and he presented the letter to an official in the chancellery, and so he, Semen, was put under guard. And after four days had passed, he, Semen, was sent from the Kronshtadt Chancellery to the Petersburg Consistory….

And this year on March 26, he raised sovereign's word (*gosudarevo slovo*) charges. In conversation, someone said to him, Semen, vile, odious words: "Our Sovereign Lady is not just (*pravdivaia*); she gave other prisoners three rubles and to us only one ruble each."

Semen said to that priest, "We are satisfied with whatever they give us, even one ruble each." And then without saying anything further, he left that priest Dmitrii. So Dmitrii was sent to some consistory, and Semen knows no other *gosudarevo slovo*.

Signed [by Popov].

Chapter 10

ORALITY/LITERACY

Magical knowledge was often exchanged in written form. Testimonies in Russian trials of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries reveal a lively interest in spell collection within a masculine world of men on the move. Women, more restricted in their movement and almost universally barred from acquiring the skills of reading and writing until well into the eighteenth century, participated little in this world. Hard evidence of hand-copied spells and small notebooks filled with pages and pages of spells substantiates the confessions made with and without torture: many men, particularly those of the low and middle ranks of administrative and military personnel, deployed their hard-won literacy skills "off the books," in their own free time, copying spells from one another. The authorities' concern about sorcery led to an unintended by-product, a welcome one for historians: that is, a set of narratives concerning the acquisition of literacy and the ways in which texts circulated. One exculpatory refrain explains the texts by pleading youth or ignorance: "I copied that out when I was young and foolish," or "I used that piece of paper as a model to copy when I was first learning to write, and I didn't know what it said." Often these approaches are accompanied by assertions that "I found that paper on the road," or "I found that paper in the marketplace" or "in the administrative office." This could serve to shroud the name of the source and to protect

contacts from persecution, but it may also indicate that these spells actually did circulate widely enough to be casually lost, or else that their possessors knew to toss them on the ground (and thereby disavow ownership) if they feared being caught.

Suspects were pushed by their interrogators to answer "when did you get these writings and from whom, and to whom did you give them?" The replies are illuminating: "I got the writings from a barge hauler when I served in the military on the Volga," "another soldier gave it to me to copy when I was serving in the regiment," or "during the siege of Smolensk." This mobile society of low-level male servicemen was one of the spheres in which spells most commonly changed hands or were copied and recopied, often far from home, where more censorious attitudes might have squelched curiosity toward these forbidden practices.

Members of the elite, of course, were not immune to the lure of sorcery, and we have occasional cases of highly educated men who were charged with possession of magical texts. Protected with greater immunity to prosecution than the relatively defenseless soldiers and clerks described above, nobles and landowners and hierarchs of the Orthodox Church all faced the wrath of the law from time to time. On occasion they were turned in by members of their own social estate, as in several cases involving brothers who accused each other, but in an interesting minority of instances, their own serfs informed on them. In the case of the nobleman Evlashev presented below (see Document 10.4), for example, his serf turned him in for possession of texts, clearly knowing full well what they were. In the Aigustov case included earlier in this collection (see Document 6.4), a wife turned in a sheaf of papers that her husband had left behind at their house, stating that she was illiterate and therefore unaware what the papers contained. She may well have had her suspicions about the contents of the papers, but it most likely was true that she could not read them for herself.

The clergy was another pool of avid collectors of magical texts. They participated in the general circulation of spells for all the usual purposes—healing, protection, sex, power—and also reached into a more rarefied world of mystical texts, imported and adapted from foreign sources, all

firmly prohibited by the church establishment. These included astrological and prophetic works, often apocryphal works that claimed biblical or ancient classical origins (see especially Documents 10.2 and 10.3).

That any magical writings survive is remarkable. From the mid-seventeenth century, Muscovite law mandated that spells and spell books, along with minstrels' musical instruments and masks, be burned, sometimes together with their owners. Peter the Great's updated Military Statute again required the burning of the texts at the punishment site (chapter 18, article 149). Luckily for historians, the order was not always followed, and some magical texts survived, either copied or glued into the court record or found in spell books outside of a judicial context.

So far in this discussion we have focused exclusively on literacy as the basis for the exchange of written texts, but literacy was not a prerequisite for active participation in the circulation of magical texts. In quite a few cases, the accused pleaded that they could not read and so could not be guilty of putting a ritual into practice. Their defense may have rung a little hollow, though; although we have not included any such cases here, many examples survive to show us that the written page itself could serve an apotropaic function: simply by sticking a piece of paper with a protective spell in his hat or belt or shoe, a man might feel himself significantly safer on the road.

Written texts, therefore, could cross the literate divide, but even so, charges of possessing magical writing were brought almost exclusively against men. Women do not seem to have participated in the written economy of witchcraft. They did, of course, join in an oral exchange in which men and women avidly contributed.

Magical knowledge circulated in a variety of ways: as advice passed down the generations from parents or grandparents; as oral tradition learned from people adept in the art of healing, cursing, or prognostication; or, sometimes, through trial and error. Several suspects confessed that they imitated what a healer had done to cure their own illness, or in one case, a woman explained that she saw an itinerant healer use a particular plant as a remedy and searched for that plant in the fields around her village so she could prescribe it to her friends and neighbors (see Document 4.5).

Completing the circle, spells could move from the written word to the oral and back again. Many of the men who were caught with written spells explained that they had copied them down from the oral dictation of a knowledgeable adept or sorcerer they met on the road. Court scribes also operated at the interface between orality and literacy when they reported the words of spells recited by illiterate witnesses.

The entries that follow invite us to focus on the modes of literacy and orality that permitted and documented the animated exchange of magical expertise.

10.1 CASE OF THE SIBERIAN TRAPPER FOUND CARRYING SPELLS (1652)

Source: RGADA, f. 214, stlb. 586, ll. 7–15. Partially reproduced at http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Russ/XVII/1640-1660/Delo_vorozebn_pism_1652/text.htm; and N. Ogloblin, "Delo o 'vorozhebnykh pis'makh,' 1652 g.," *Russkaia starina* 81 (1894): 234–36.

This is the sole document surviving from a case investigated in Siberia in 1652. The document is the report sent to the tsar and central chancelleries in Moscow by Bogdan Oladin, the military governor of the Russian fortress of Ilimsk in central Siberia. As is standard procedure, the governor explains that the case was initiated by a complaint brought in the form of a petition to the tsar and the local governor. Since a sizable fraction of the population of Russian Siberia had come there involuntarily, it is not unusual to find that the complaint was lodged by an "exiled merchant." Although living in exile, he was allowed to continue in his line of work, and his petition was taken seriously. The merchant brought charges of possessing magical spells against a local fur trapper named Mikishka Ondreev. The evidence of the written texts incriminated the trapper, and he confessed to collecting the spells. When the trapper named the individuals who had provided him with the texts, the governor followed up by arranging for their arrests, even when it required mobilizing the help of governors in surrounding outposts. The fact that such a detailed report was compiled and sent to Moscow shows that even in distant Siberia, Moscow exerted powerful oversight and control.

Oladin's report includes careful description of the spells and booklets found in Mikishka's possession. The list provides a precious catalog, the earliest we have found, of the kinds of spells that were in circulation in Muscovy. The inventory bears striking

similarity to the spells that were popular in European Russia at the time and that crop up in other trials, indicating a shared Russian magical culture that stretched across Russia's Eurasian empire. This culture would have encompassed Russian and Cossack servitors, exiles, and settlers, though not the indigenous population. There seems to have been little crossover between Russian and indigenous magical cultures, and for the most part Siberian shamans were neither hindered in their practices nor indicted for witchcraft. They occupied a distinctive category, and the Russian occupying forces did not confuse them, or the threat they posed, with their own practitioners of magic.

One item in Mikishka's collection merits particular consideration: the "Dream of the Mother of God," a popular apocryphal prayer that individuals invoked to protect themselves from a variety of calamities, including war, storms, drowning, the devil, evil men and spirits, death, unjust judges, and even insomnia. Scholars have generally asserted that the "Dream" is first attested in the early eighteenth century, but Mikishka's collection documents it a full half-century earlier. Actually, it shows up a number of times in material from the second half of the seventeenth century.[1]

The kinds of spells Mikishka carried and the circle of individuals from whom he obtained them demonstrate that the trapper Mikishka participated in a male world of enterprise and sociability. His testimony outlines a web of contacts, all male, who provided him with his magical materials through a network mediated by literacy, an attribute overwhelmingly associated with men. The court focused a great deal of attention on determining which of the spells were written in his hand and which were written by others. Of exceptional interest was a spell written "in an unknown language, not Russian, but written in Russian [letters]." Further, the particular spells that he bothered to collect were concentrated around the kinds of interests and pursuits that men tended to monopolize. His choices underscore particular spheres of activity: hunting, fishing, striking fear in people's hearts, and, in multiple iterations, protecting his penis—that is, guarding it from magically inflicted swelling and keeping it erect. Of course, he included in his collection the requisite "spells for women" that would guarantee the success of his sexual overtures, although he insisted that he never used them.

An intriguing idiosyncrasy of the case is the wide variety of terms used to designate Mikishka's magical texts. Along with a notebook (*tetrat'ka*), he was found to possess letters or writings (*pis'ma*), words (*slova*), spells (*zagovory*), prayers (*molitvy*), and, most unusually, nonsense (*vraki*) and lies or falsehoods (*vran'e*). There is no indication that these latter terms intimate any skepticism on the part of the governor; they simply seem to be part of his expanded vocabulary of negative descriptors.

To Sovereign, Tsar, and Grand Prince Aleksei Mikhailovich, Autocrat of All Russia, your slave Bogdashka Oladin petitions. In this year, Sovereign, 1652, on April 22, the exiled Moscow tradesman (*ssyl'noi torgovoi chelovek*) Garasim Konoplin orally petitioned you and also petitioned me in the governor's office in Ilimsk Fortress about the trapper Mikishka Ondreev, and Garasim presented various handwritten notes that he took from this

Mikishka. And I, your slave, ordered those writings investigated in the governor's office in my presence and in the presence of many trading and service people—the customs officer, the priest of the Savior Cathedral, Obrasim Zhevoltev, and Hieromonk Felaret (*a monk who had been ordained as a priest*)—to find out what those texts were about. I will attach a list of the people who were here when the writings were examined.

I am also sending to you in Moscow the original report of the case, copied here word for word, and the witchcraft texts (*vorozhebnye pis'ma*).

I ordered the cathedral priest Obrasim and community customs official Ivan Kriukov to read the texts, but I myself, your slave, did not read them. I, your slave, ordered Mikishka tortured severely to find out [the names of the individuals from whom] he got those letters and whom, if anyone, he has bewitched.

Mikishka confessed that he got those letters in (*the Siberian fortress-city of*) Eniseisk from a trapper named Ivashka Olekseev, nicknamed Motory, from Vychegda. I sent [a report] to you, Sovereign, in Moscow, enumerating the letters he [Mikishka] admitted [to having in his possession] and recording his confession. The word-for-word transcript of confession is attached below.

I put Mikishka Ondreev in jail, pending your sovereign order, and I sent [a request] to Governor Ofonasii Pashkov[2] at Eniseisk Fort and told him to search for that Ivashko Olekseev and to put him in jail pending your sovereign order. And I, your slave, did not dare to fail to write to you about this matter, and I will do whatever you order in this matter.

On April 25, 1652, in the town hall in the presence of many people (*a long of names follows, covering almost two full pages*), Garasim Konoplin submitted a stack of papers written in Mikishka Ondreev's hand.

In the presence of those people, Governor Bogdan Denisovich Oladin ordered those papers examined. They removed from the stack of papers a list of the sovereign's grain allotments which he [Mikishka] had recorded in the presence of Orsenka Briusechnin's (?) service men while peasants were carting the sovereign's grain, and that list in his [Mikishka's] handwriting.

(*This presumably related to some official business that Mikishka had been instructed to carry out.*)

(*They also found in the stack of papers*) "The Dream of the Mother of God" and a prayer to St. Catherine, Martyr of God,[3] and a prayer that is included in that same "Dream" [that begins with] "Lord God Jesus," and that copy of the "Dream" was written out in Mikishka's hand.[4] And among those writings they found a prayer to Christ's Martyr St. Catherine, in Mikishka's hand. And another entry had "The Dream of the Mother of God" and a cross drawn in Mikishka's handwriting.

And the third entry had words for hunting wild animals.

The fourth had words for how to go cleanly that were not in Mikishka's handwriting. *(The meaning of this spell is unclear:* kak chistu khodit*, literally, how to go to cleanliness. Does this mean how to be an honest man? How to avoid detection? Or is it the beginning of a phrase that would further clarify its meaning?)*

The fifth was a spell to attract women.

The sixth entry was a spell against *kila* (*swellings of the testicles caused by witchcraft*).

There were verses of St. Nicholas addressed to God the Creator, and a prayer that is applied to children.

A spell to strengthen the secret member (*penis*).

A spell to prevent hernias and toothache and injuries resulting from various misfortunes.

Lots of magical nonsense (*vraki)* to make people fear him, Mikishka, and about how to catch fish.[5]

A notebook, and in it various words against hernia, and spells for finding beehives with honey in the forest and for strengthening the secret member.

An incantation to stop bleeding; and an incantation for catching fish.

Spells so that the male member would be erect and other types of magical writings, and a notebook with all sorts of other falsehoods (*vsiakoe drugoe vran'e*) in his, Mikishka's, hand.

And among those same writings were found a prayer in an unknown language, not Russian, but written in Russian [letters].

A list of the testimony given under torture, recorded word for word, and how he, Mikikshka, confessed.

(*written in a different hand*) And in 1652 on the seventeenth of June, following the denunciation by Garasim Konoplin, Governor Bogdan Denisevich Oladin questioned the trapper Mikishka, son of Ondrei Sysoletin,[6] and ordered him tortured harshly:

Where did he get the spells, and from whom, by name, and who gave them to him? And he, Mikishka Ondreev Sysoletin, was tortured severely and under torture said:

> The prayer to St. Catherine, I copied along the Lena River from a trapper named Levka from the town of Ustiug. He, Levka, gave me "The Dream of the Virgin." And the criminal letter to attract women and to seduce them and to strengthen the male member and for seduction, and spells against swelling of the testicles brought on by witchcraft, and magical nonsense for [hunting] wild animals and for fishing were all given to him in Eniseisk Fortress by a trapper [named Ivashka], but he [Ivashka] didn't tell Mikishka whose son he was or from what town or village, and Mikishka said he didn't know with whom Ivashka lives. "But," he said, "Ivashka gave me all those magical texts on the road in a meadow." The spells were the same that he described in his first round of questioning (*i.e., before being subjected to torture*): the notebook and spell for hunting wild animals, the spells for seduction, and various magical texts and prayers addressed to the Creator and the prayer to God regarding successful hunting or fishing, and the prayer to God and to the Son (*or boy?*),[7] and the spell against hernias and against toothache and against various injuries caused by mishaps and the notebook with various spells against hernias, or finding beehives and honey in the wild, and strengthening the male member, and the spells about fishing and other types of magical texts, and some spells against fever that are not in Russian but written in Russian [letters].

The governor questioned him firmly about whether all those spells and writings were his, and in questioning with torture he said:

> The notebook is written in my handwriting, but the things that are written on loose papers were given to [me] by Ivashko Alekseev from Vychegda, called Motora, a trapper, in Eniseisk. He lives in the village of Nizhnei with the peasant farmer Sergei, and he gave those writings to Mikishka on the street, while chatting, drunk on fermented kvass. Ivashko is young. He has no beard, but he is able to write. He gave him, Mikishka, the spells out of kindness as they were traveling along the road together, when it was just the two of them alone together. He gave them to him last year.

And Mikishka went from Eniseisk on a boat with the merchant Danilko, but Danilko didn't know anything about the texts. And he, Mikishka Ondreev, confessed to everything. The governor had him tortured to see whom he had bewitched with those spells, but under torture he didn't confess to anything else. He said he hadn't bewitched anyone and he didn't seduce women, and on the original copy of the confession he, Mikishka, signed with his own hand.

10.2 A THEOLOGICAL DEFENSE OF HERBAL HEALING: PETITION OF IVAN IVANOV, PRIEST OF THE CHURCH OF THE NATIVITY IN KOMERSK DISTRICT, TO SIMON, ARCHBISHOP OF VOLOGDA AND BELOZERSK (1679–80)

Source: Archive of the Saint Petersburg Institute of History (AspbIH), koll. 117, op. 1, no. 1305. We are grateful to Aleksandr Lavrov for sharing both his transcription of the archival file and his analysis of the case with us. We draw on it in the discussion below.[8]

The document published below holds particular interest for two reasons: first, because it originates not from the archives of state institutions but rather from an episcopal archive; and second, and even more remarkably, because of the nature of the argument it advances.

The case arose when the brother of the priest Ivan, the sexton Khariton Ivanov, was accused, apparently by his own brother, of keeping grasses for use in herbal healing. The petition that survives comes not from Khariton but from the brother who initially lodged the accusation. One way to understand the petitioner's role in this is to assume that he handed his brother over to the local police in the course of some kind of conflict with him. As a result, Khariton found himself under arrest in the Bureau of Investigations (*Sysknoi prikaz*) in Vologda–that is, in the hands of the secular authorities. One way or another, the priest Ivan subsequently regretted his action, perhaps because he too became a suspect in the case and was slated to join his brother for interrogation by the secular authorities. Apparently fearing this process (for good reason, since interrogation

could easily involve harsh torture), Priest Ivan submitted a petition to the archbishop, requesting that his case should not be sent to the Bureau of Investigations, and further, that his brother should be transferred from the secular justice system to the diocesan authorities. Thus he tried to use the conflict between secular and ecclesiastical jurisdictions to his advantage and to that of his brother. Because it was sent to an archbishop of the Church, the petition of Priest Ivan was preserved in the Vologda diocesan archive, one of the best-preserved episcopal archives of the seventeenth century.

The petition he submitted is extraordinary. As Aleksandr Lavrov points out, it is the sole document of this type in which the right to use healing grasses is actively and affirmatively justified. Other suspects simply denied that they used herbal medicine, pleaded that they had no idea where the roots and grasses found in their possession came from, or that they used the ingredients only for good and not for evil. Priest Ivan seems, however, to take a radical approach in his ecclesiastical, text-based justification of the use of natural remedies in herbal medicine. He shows off his erudition with references to an assortment of biblical texts and church fathers, from Jesus to Basil the Great, all providing unimpeachable evidence of the divine origins of plants and strong precedent for the use of herbal healing. Priest Ivan's references are provided and discussed in the notes below, but for the reader who chooses not to follow up on the details, we offer as an example this delightful passage from Joshua ben Sira, identified as the author of the Old Testament Book of Ecclesiasticus, in celebration of the medical use of natural plants: "The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and the sensible will not despise them."

What is unique about this document might be explained by the poor preservation and incomplete examination of other diocesan archives. In other words, there may have been other such cases, but given the preponderance of evidence, it seems likely that his petition was a one-of-a kind, and the uniqueness of its argument is not just a product of uneven source survival.

To the Sovereign Most Holy Simon, archbishop of Vologda and Belozersk,[9] your pilgrim of Vologda Province, Komersk District, Priest Ivan of the Church of the Nativity of Christ, petitions! In the present year 1679/80, my brother Khariton Ivanov, sexton of that same church, sits behind bars in Vologda in the Bureau of Investigations. In accordance with the written report of his oral testimony, a memorandum was sent to your holy judicial office saying that I, your pilgrim, should be confronted with him face-to-face [as part of the investigation], to answer the charge that I gave him grasses to cure equine plague (*ot konskogo padezha*). I never gave my brother Khariton any grasses, but even if I did give such grasses [to him], I would swear to such a thing and have nothing to fear, because such things are not forbidden by the Holy Church and are even blessed.

My brother, being angry at me, says that because I got fed up with him in the heat of an argument, I showed the local police that grass in the mane of his horse, but I never expected such consequences for my brother, that he would be taken (*to prison*) for no reason and for no cause.

And if there are to be consequences imposed on us for this, then the sin done by us [is not a sin at all], according to the Fifth Conversation of Basil the Great.[10] [He wrote] about the plants of the land, in accordance with the word of God, that the land will grow an abundance of grasses,[11] and [other holy books] write about grasses extensively, so if we are guilty, then Christ, who healed a bleeding woman with the hem of his cloak and worked with grasses, is guilty too.[12] And many women were healed prior to the reign of Julian the Apostate.[13] He, Julian the Apostate, destroyed the image of Christ and crushed that grass. SS Cosmas and Damian[14] and Luke the Evangelist also used these same grasses for healing people and animals. Joshua ben Sira greatly praised doctors in chapter 38.[15] I remind you, My Lord, of all of these points, which don't add up to a reason for denunciation, because in the memorandum that was sent about me, your pilgrim, was written: "It has become necessary to send the priest to the Bureau of Investigations for a face-to-face confrontation with the sexton and for interrogation about whether he, the priest, gave the sexton grasses for curing equine plague." And I, your pilgrim, beg for mercy. It is not necessary, My Lord, to send me to the Bureau of Investigations in connection with that suit. I am not guilty in any way, and if some actual guilt on my part turns up, you will judge, My Lord. If you decide, according to the rules, to cast me out from my ecclesiastical rank, then order me sent to the Bureau of Investigations.

Most Merciful Lord, Most Holy Simon, archbishop of Vologda and Beloozersk, have mercy on me, your pilgrim! Order, Lord, a message to be sent to the attendant of the royal table and governor Ivan Mikhailovich Kolychev and to State Secretary Vasilii Andreev in the Bureau of Investigations, in response to my petition. And if you will it, have my brother, sexton Khariton, sent to you. Lord, prelate, have mercy!

To this petition Ivan, priest of the Church of the Nativity, signed his hand.

10.3 A HEGUMEN'S POSSESSION OF MAGICAL AND FORTUNE-TELLING TEXTS (1720)

Source: RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 82, ll. 162 ob.–63, 47 ob.–48. A condensed version of the case may be found in the Holy Synod's publication of its archival documents. See *Opisanie dokumentov i del, khraniashchikhsia v arkhive Sviateishego Sinoda*, vol. 1: *(1542–1721 gg.)* (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1869), 272–77, nos. 266–71.

In 1720, ecclesiastical investigators found various compromising magical texts, which Hegumen Simon of the Nikolaev-Pishchegovskii Monastery had thrown into the privy in anticipation of the search. Under questioning, he admitted that he had found the materials in a rubbish heap outside the monastery, that he had committed fornication, and that he had learned from the sacristan Nikita Vasilev how to find lost objects by means of fortune-telling. The investigators learned that in his previous capacity as hegumen of the Kuzminskii Monastery Simon had visited and paid respects to the disgraced Evdokia Lopukhina, Peter I's first wife, when she had already been forced to take the veil and had stayed at the monastery on two separate occasions. Due to Simon's political indiscretion, his case was transferred from the purview of the Holy Synod to that of the Secret Chancellery. Ultimately, the chancellery turned the matter back to the Holy Synod for a decision. The Synod ordered that the hegumen be dispatched to the Solovetskii Monastery on the White Sea, a common place of banishment in the remote North, for the rest of his life and deprived him of the right of conducting religious services.

In keeping with this chapter's focus on literacy and orality, we are presenting only the most relevant excerpts from the case: the court's catalog of works found in Simon's secret stash, and a brief description of a popular mode of fortune-telling by casting cubes of bread. Simon's collection of texts attests to the circulation of loosely reworked classical and apocryphal and even fully canonical biblical tales and teachings of the church fathers in a shadowy world of semilegitimate magic. Within Simon's hidden trove, the synodal summary informs us, were passages from *The Gates of Aristotle the Wise, The Prophet and Magician Barlaam*, and *The Prayer of the Holy Martyr Cyprian for the Exorcism of Unclean Spirits*. These titles announce Simon's participation in a highly literate world where passages of imported works were copied and recopied, their contents and their mystical meanings discussed and shared. *The Gates of Aristotle*, for instance, was one of the most commonly copied mystical texts and one of the texts most roundly condemned by the leaders of the Church (see Document 3.4). *The Gates* was a Russian version of the "pseudo-Aristotelian" *Secretum secretorum* or *Secret of Secrets*. It discussed astrology, alchemy, physiognomy, and the magic properties of precious stones and magical

talismans, and was allegedly written by Aristotle for Alexander the Great. The text in fact dates to the ninth or tenth century and originated as an Arabic *Mirror for Princes*. According to Will Ryan, the Old Russian translation of the Hebrew translations dates prior to 1489.[16] The unquenchable popularity of *The Gates of Aristotle* despite its condemnation by the Church stemmed from its application in fortune-telling and divination. Church leaders classified it in the same category as astrological texts and censured it in the same terms, as a device to bypass God's will. *The Prophet and Magician Barlaam* was another popular text with demonstrably wide circulation. It recounted a picaresque story of adventure loosely anchored to a religious theme, presenting a Christianized take on the life of the Buddha, himself recast as a Christian saint. The utility of *The Prayer of the Holy Martyr Cyprian* as a rite for exorcism placed it again in the gray zone between sanctioned clerical activity and illicit magic.[17]

The descriptions of the kind of handwriting used in some of these texts remind us that magic and literacy both were expressed and practiced in various registers. The "semiuncial [ecclesiastical] script in vermilion and black ink" that drew the investigators' eye in the first entry below indicated a high-cultural form of written expression, one generally limited to members of the clergy, and used here for a set of learned (though banned) texts. These texts would have been less likely to surface in the secret collections of peasants or ordinary townsmen, while Simon's stash did not contain any of the stock spells for love, sex, or healing that his lower-ranking or secular counterparts favored. Nor would they have copied their illicit spells in the calligraphic semiuncial with red rubrication as Simon did. They employed a rougher chancellery cursive script, the utilitarian hand of administration and routine literacy.

Fortune-telling booklets in Simon's possession

(1) Among the booklets there was one with four folios of writing in semiuncial [ecclesiastical] script in vermilion and black ink; fourteen pages have writing with an initial page indicating the book's title as *The Gates of Aristotle the Wise and of Alexander, Tsar of Macedonia*, which describes many wisdoms; it is good to understand and to review and to have knowledge of one or two key pieces of wisdom but to keep a number of them secret. Later there are also instructions about how to cast bones (*for fortune-telling*) and many notations about secrets and omens that provide answers once the dots are cast;

(2) verses supposedly from the Psalter in eight folios and 123 pages, which were to be used for divination;

(3) a booklet of four folios in cursive titled *The Prophet and Magician Barlaam*, followed by what we both understand and surmise to be devious advice and philosophies, then many divinations written on fifty pages and then five blank pages;

(4) a booklet written in semiuncial script on eight folios titled *Divinations and Predictions of the Wise Prophet Barlaam*;

(5) a booklet of eight folios, written in semiuncial script in ink and vermilion, titled *The Prayer of the Holy Martyr Cyprian for the Exorcism of Unclean Spirits*, which is written on twenty-two pages; there is a partial column [*polustolpets*] of cursive with a prayer to the devil written from the top down;

(6) a text written in black in a partial column from Hegumen Simon to the ordained sacristan Nikita Andreev and to Domna Romanova. A booklet in four folios, in which prophecies of the miracle-working saint Kuzma of Iakhrinsk were written, was placed [among the pages of] the document.

The sacristan Nikita Vasilev's testimony in the Secret Chancellery

In response to the hegumen's request, he, Nikita, cut up bread into forty-one pieces and cast them with the hegumen, explaining to him what each lot turned up. During the time they conducted the fortune-telling, the hegumen did not let anyone into his cell…. He, Nikita, explained that the farriers of the village Ivanovskoe on the Cherkasskii estate, who traveled to various places to treat horses, came to his place and cast lots for him, cutting similar sorts of lots from bread and throwing them into three piles. As they cast lots for him, they explained that whichever pile is the largest is the one where the answer to the divination lies.

10.4 TRANSCRIPTION OF AN OFFENSIVE NOTE BY A NOBLE ARCHITECTURAL JOURNEYMAN, ALEKSEI PETROVICH EVLASHEV (1731)

Source: RGIA, f. 796, op. 12, d. 132, ll. 3–3 ob., 16, 2, 22–22 ob. The spell is published in A. L. Toporkov and A. A. Turilov, eds., *Otrechennye chtenie v Rossii XVII-XVIII vv.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2002), 126. A truncated published version of the case is in *Opisanie dokumentov i del, khraniashchikhsia v arkhive Sviateishego Sinoda*, vol. 11: *(1731 g.)* (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1903), 160–61. We are grateful to

Elena B. Smilianskaia for sharing her transcription of the archival document and her commentary.

A letter containing a spell to protect against bewitchment and against witches came to the Secret Chancellery from Ivan Maksimov, a servant (presumably a serf) of the journeyman Aleksei Petrovich Evlashev (1706–1760) in the Petersburg Chancellery of Architecture. Evlashev was one of the early beneficiaries of Peter I's attempt to professionalize architectural training by way of apprenticeship in order to build his new city of St. Petersburg, founded in 1703. At the time of the denunciation, Evlashev was assisting the famous Italian architect Francesco Bartolomeo Rastrelli in building a summer palace for Empress Anna in Moscow. Maksimov, who may in fact have been exacting revenge against the Evlashev family for beating him, presented the letter to the officials as a case of treason against the sovereign. These public denunciations (see Documents 4.8, 9.2, and 9.7) were taken deadly seriously and received full hearings in high-level courts. Perhaps Maksimov had heard about Empress Anna Ioannovna's 1731 decree against "wizards" (see Document 3.16) and chose to take advantage of it to get back at his abusers. Confronted with indisputable material evidence, Evlashev explained that he wrote the spell when he was a child, without giving the matter any particular thought, and since that time he had forgotten about it and "never used the spell in practice." The letter was found among Evlashev's papers in the village of Ivanovskoe in Kurmysh Province in the middle Volga region. The case was heard by the Holy Synod, which had for several years been advocating for the Church's jurisdiction over witchcraft. Considering possession of the spell to constitute a "minor affair," the ecclesiastical authorities acquitted Evlashev, "because they found nothing of any importance, just superstitious nonsense, in this minor document." They did, however, turn his denunciator Maksimov over to the police. Evlashev eventually became a major architect of the Elizabethan baroque, mainly in Moscow and its environs.

From a modern perspective, the spell provides insight into popular religiosity in the early eighteenth century. The text not only names a number of holy individuals correctly, but it also follows the ordering of the iconostasis in Russian Orthodox churches in naming them: it begins with the figures of the first deisis row (a set of icons representing Christ in Majesty flanked by his mother and John the Forerunner [i.e., St. John the Baptist], which appears above the central doors of the iconostasis), then moves to local saints, and then to the prophets.[18] This type of detail suggests that the spell reflected familiarity with the Church, its layout, and its saints.

Denunciation

The porter Ivan Maksimov was taken to the Police Chancellery in Moscow because he called out "Guard!" (*This public cry for attention was the initial step in charging someone with treason against the sovereign.*) It turned out

that he had stolen a written spell from his master, and he denounced [him] a short while after he had been punished by his master's mother.

The interrogation of Aleksei Evlashev, March 31, 1731

And in interrogation Evlashev admitted the letter that was sent with this denunciation is written in his hand. It's genuine, but when and where he wrote it, he doesn't remember. But he recognizes that he wrote it when he was young. This is also supported by the denunciation of his servant, Ivan Maksimov, who testified in the Police Chancellery that he found the document in his village in Kurmysh Province in the village of Ivanovskoe, but he, Evlashev, has not been in that village for six years. And he doesn't remember from whom he copied that document. He never put the spell into action and he never instructed anyone else in how to use it, and he never gave any spells to anyone to copy, neither this one or any other similar spells. And he never copied out any spells himself or taught anyone to do so. He has had three spiritual fathers (*that is, priest-confessors*). The name of the first one, from his childhood years—from age ten or twelve, but in which specific years he doesn't remember—was the priest Pavel from that same Ivanovskoe village, who ministered to the souls and administered holy communion in that village for two years. Then he moved to Moscow and had spiritual fathers there too. From the time he was twelve years old until last year, 1730, his spiritual father was Prokopii Dorofeev of the Church of Philip the Apostle, which is behind the Arbat Gates, but he died, and since 1730, he has had as his spiritual father the priest Grigorii Afonasev of the Church of the Great Holy Martyr Piatnitsa, called Rzhevsk. In 1730 and in this year 1731 during the first week of Lent, he confessed and took holy communion [from Priest Grigorii], but he did not tell that priest about the above-mentioned letter during confession, because he didn't remember it, and because he never used it in practice. He has no record of heresy or of opposing the Church, and he doesn't know of any such conduct on anyone else's part. And presently, he says, he recognizes that the document that he wrote in his childhood is not good for anything and is vile and unworthy of any faith, and previously and to this day, he has not used that spell and does not use it, and that is the full interrogation…. And from birth he is twenty-two years old.

Interrogation of Ivan Maksimov, the servant who denounced Evlashev, on June 4, 1731

And on June 4, Maksimov was sent for and questioned, and he said he found the letter written by the hand of his master, Aleksei Evlashev, in the previous year 1730, in September, but he doesn't remember on which day. He found it on the estate of his master in Kurmysh Province, in the village Ivanovskoe, when he was sorting through Evlashev's letters to sort out the worthless from the necessary, on the order of Evlashev's mother, the widow Anna, daughter of Sava. It was concealed among copies of enserfment charters and deeds to the Kurmysh estate, and taking it with him, he put it in his traveling box, and Evlashev's mother didn't see it. Only his, Maksimov's, own brother, Fedor Maksimov, knew about it. Fedor is also Evlashev's man. Upon his arrival in Moscow in the spring, when they started beating him and his brother, he cried "sovereign's word and deed." Then Maksimov showed how Evlashev's mother beat him with a stick, pulled him by the hair, placed him in chains, and wanted to beat him with a switch.

Evidence: A protective (apotropaic) spell against bewitchment and against witches

> The true Christ; Most Holy Mother of God; John the Forerunner; Archangel Michael; Archangel Gabriel; Peter and Paul, the highest apostles; Saint Nicholas; Saint Tikhon; Zosima and Savatii, Solovetskii miracle-workers;[19] Gurei, Varsonofei, miracle-workers of Kazan; Martyr-SS Florus and Laurus; Most Holy Father Makarii; Most Holy Father Sergius, and Kirik, and his mother Ulita; Righteous Bogolep;[20] Elijah the Prophet; Moses the Prophet; Daniel the Prophet; Zacharias the Prophet; protect [me] with your mantle and have mercy [upon me]!
>
> I, slave of God So-and-so, cast this spell to protect from male witches and female witches, from male heretics and female heretics, from [all] heretics in the world, [be they] princes and boyars, and priests and priests' wives, and virgins, or the sons of those heretically claiming to be virgin mothers.

I, slave of God So-and-so, lock myself up tightly with three times nine locks, and I give you, Archangel Michael, Archangel Gabriel, three times nine locks. They carry those three times nine locks to the ocean-sea; they place them on the Alatyr Stone, leaving no footprints, drinking no water from the ocean-sea. Let no one bewitch me, slave of God So-and-so, and neither friend nor foe take or not take me, nor abduct me, nor grow wise, and in those three times nine locks is a strong spike, and so

may I, slave of God So-and-so, be safe from witches and heretics. In this my word, my only word, which word is said and not said. Amen.

Trial and sentence

(To the investigation was attached a letter in the name of Feofan Prokopovich, a member of the Holy Synod and a leading intellectual, poet, and propagandist at the imperial court,[21] to the effect that Aleksei Evlashev was needed to work on the construction of His Imperial Highness's palace in Aninhof. The letter was signed by Petr Moshkov, May 5, 1731.

Also attached were excerpts from a number of legal and ecclesiastical law codes and teachings on witchcraft and related themes. Excerpts came from the Kormchaia kniga *[a medieval book of church law—see the first document in 3.1], the Twenty-fourth rule of the Synod of Ancyra [a church council held in 314]; the Eighty-third rule of Basil the Great; the Laws of the [Imperial] City (i.e., Constantinople); the Military Statute, article 1 [see the first document in 3.13]; and the decree of May 20, 1731, against wizards [see Document 3.16].)*

10.5 AN INCRIMINATING NOTEBOOK OF INCANTATIONS AND SPELLS (1734–37)

Source: N. N. Pokrovskii, "Tetrad' zagovorov 1734 goda," in *Nauchnyi ateizm, religiia i sovremennost'*, ed. A. T. Moskalenko (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1987), 256–66; RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 567, ll. 4–20.

On January 3, 1737, Gustav von Bühren, commander of the Izmailovskii Regiment and brother of Empress Anna's favorite Ernst Johann von Bühren, addressed a letter to Chief of the Secret Chancellery Andrei Ushakov, informing him of the existence in the regiment of a medical student by the name of Ivan Vasilev Molodavkin (also known as Bezsonov, which was his stepfather's surname) who possessed a "heretical book written in his own hand," which he had passed on to the regimental office for publication. The quartermaster of the Life Guard Semen Alekseev had identified Molodavkin as the culprit and later sent the chancellery a sealed packet containing the notebook as well as a kerchief "containing roots and herbs tied into a knot, and a woman's shirt, the collar and sleeves of which were covered in blood." The case against Molodavkin Bezsonov became a *slovo i delo* or treasonous matter because the notebook contained incantations and spells intended to sway the opinions of the highest political authorities and to mitigate the effects of torture, as well as a satanic verse. Most of the spells were for attracting women or preserving or sabotaging male sexual prowess. The spells are marvelously poetic, conveying a sense of a lofty and lyrical magical aesthetic. The first and the eighth echo elements of the fantastical spell against fever in Document 9.2. Fortunately for historians, because of Bühren's standing with the empress, the notebook of spells and incantations was not burned but maintained in the chancellery's papers.[22]

As it turns out, Molodavkin had sought the help of a sorcerer named Matvei Nikitin Ovchinnikov, during Christmastide of 1736, a time when, according to popular beliefs, spirits were bountiful and lewd behavior was more tolerated. Ovchinnikov was actually a serf belonging to the Solovetskii Monastery on the White Sea, who had come to St. Petersburg with his son looking for work. While doing various unskilled jobs, he had taken a notebook from one of his employers. He quickly found it very useful in treating people of various ailments by saying the appropriate incantation over water or wax and sometimes using roots and herbs for healing. In one instance, Ovchinnikov had asked a woman interested in attracting a specific man to bring him a shirt that had the man's bloodstains, in this case from a nosebleed. It is worth noting here that this is the first

example in this volume in which it was a woman who turned to magic to attract a sexual partner. Spells in the female voice do exist in the historical archives, but they remain rare until the nineteenth century.[23] In the two instances where Ovchinnikov had helped clients gain the grace of superiors, one involved a serf seeking an owner's kindness and the other a publican seeking mercy from the merchant who owned his tavern. In exchange for his magical interventions, Ovchinnikov asserted that he received a bit of money in addition to food. He denied all charges of sorcery, as did Molodavkin Bezsonov. In the end, Ovchinnikov was handed over to the governor's office for further interrogation after having been tortured in the Secret Chancellery. His fate is not known. Molodavkin Bezsonov was sentenced to three rounds of the military gauntlet for having copied out some of the spells and then was dispatched to another regiment.[24]

The inclusion of a complete set of spells in the official record makes this a neat conclusion to our chapter on literacy and orality. Both the court and the guilty party were clearly fully immersed in a world where writing was an essential and regular practice. Yet the spells themselves instruct the practitioner to speak the written word ("three times over clean wax"; "over a clean handkerchief twenty-seven times in a row"). Oral pronunciation and repetition remained key to the functioning of magic. And even in an increasingly literate world of male clerks and clerics, the spoken word remained a crucial mode of conveying information, whether official or subversive.

The incantations and spells

1. A prayer against demonic fevers and regular fevers

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Lord God, bless us.

I, slave of God, shall arise and after crossing myself shall leave the hut by the doors, I shall leave the yard by the gates, and will go far out to an empty field, where there is a sunken lake. On that sunken lake there is a type of bird (*soza*) that flies around all countries, all cities, all markets, and is flying toward me, slave of God So-and-so, and will drive away and expunge from me, slave of God So-and-so, all types of perils and ghosts and spirits that cause illness and poxes, fever (*kumokha is one of Herod's daughters*) and another type of fever (*trischu*); the Russian and black illness (*referring to illnesses often caused by malefic magic*), winter, grass, water, forest, mountain, stone illnesses, and the illness caused by envy and the evil eye (*zavidost' ochei zlykh chelovek)*, and the ferocious illness of the inflamed hernia. And it flies further onto the open plain toward the east and summons the help of the true Christ with his lifegiving cross and the

Mother of God, the Most Pure Birthgiver with her incorruptible mantle, and Christ's saint Nicholas the Wonderworker with his holy spirit, and the three church fathers Basil the Great, Gregory the Theologian, and John the Golden Tongued (*Chrysostom*) for me, slave of God So-and-so. And having come to help me, slave of God So-and-so, the true Christ with his holy spirit and all the holy heavenly powers of Christ will drive away and cut off and remove from me, slave of God So-and-so, the perils, ghosts, and spirits that make one unwell as well as poxes. So that this slave of God won't have this serious illness and this fierce malady, not in his bones, nor in his brain, nor in his heart, nor in his veins, nor in his joints, nor in his body. So that this slave of God will have neither to scream nor to moan from this fierce malady and this painful illness in every hour and for all time, in the full moon and in youth, and in the last quarter of the moon will dissipate and in the last quarter of the moon. For all eternity, Amen.

2. A prayer addressed to those in authority

Lord God, bless me. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

As a result of my father, slave of God, my mother gave birth and the Lord blessed me. I, slave of God, having arisen and crossed myself, and I, slave of God, will go and make the sign of the cross and pray to my Savior and the Most Pure Birthgiver of God, and I will wash myself, slave of God, with the morning's sweet dew and bright dawn and attire myself at dusk with clouds and the heavens. In front of me, slave of God, the righteous sun is blazing, and behind me, slave of God, the radiant moon is illuminating things, and around me, slave of God, numerous stars are keeping me safe. Over my, head, the Savior and the Most Pure Birthgiver are safeguarding and protecting me from all four sides from every enemy and adversary with all of their heavenly powers.

I, slave of God, having arisen and crossed myself, will go and make the sign of the cross, with angelic joy and David's meekness and a motherly heart to every authority—the tsar and patriarch and metropolitan and

bishop, archimandrite and hegumen and archpriest and priest and every other rank of individuals within the married and monastic clergy and every Orthodox Christian, male and female. And just as God's people rejoice in the righteous sun, just the way that the sun arises and heats up all the heavens and earth, so will all authorities—tsars and patriarchs, metropolitans, archbishops and bishops, archimandrites, hegumens, archpriests, and priests and every priestly and monastic rank and Orthodox Christians, male and female, will rejoice. And my potential adversary will become lifeless before me, slave of God, and will not be able to utter or think a word against me, slave of God. And just as a dead man cannot open his mouth, and like a thrush before a falcon, my adversary likewise cannot exercise his mind. And just as the Most Pure Birthgiver, the archangels and angels and apostles and prophets and myrrh-bearing women and all the saints rejoiced in Christ's resurrection from the grave, so will all of the earthly authorities—tsars and patriarchs and metropolitans, archbishops and bishops, archimandrites, hegumens and archpriests and priests and every other priestly and monastic rank and all Orthodox Christians, male and female, and all clerks rejoice in observing me, slave of God. And my potential adversary and enemy will be unable to say a word against me, as his tongue will be that of a heathcock, his heart that of a rabbit, and his eyes those of an ox. And I, slave of God, will speak before every authority just like a bolt of thunder sounds; and just as thunder strikes fear in every Orthodox Christian, so will my words strike fear in every earthly authority. And my potential adversary will be struck thus when there is a new moon and half-moon, and first quarter of the moon, a new moon and an old moon, and for all twenty-four hour periods, forever and ever, Amen.

Say this three times over clean water, clean wax, a candle, and a clean handkerchief. Drink the water, put the wax against your cheek, and wipe with the handkerchief.

3. A prayer to the authorities

In the name of the Father and Son and Holy Spirit.

Just as a tsar's eyes, which are like a mother's heart, gaze (*lovingly?*) at a dead man's face, and just as a heathcock doesn't speak and a dead man's mouth doesn't open, so may no one think or conceive of malevolence or evil against me, slave of God. Just as the magnificent sun, and the bright moon and innumerable stars arise in the sky and just as the tsars of the realm arise on the earth, and just as the tsars cannot stop looking at the whole realm, and Orthodox Christians cannot stop looking at the magnificent sun, and the bright moon and innumerable stars, so may they be unable to stop looking at me, slave of God. And may I, slave of God, appear to this other slave of God to be more magnificent than the sun and brighter than the moon and innumerable stars. I, the slave of God, will cluster together with the innumerable stars. Just as holy and glorious as a burning wax candle standing before the true God, so may I, slave of God, be without sin and glorious before this other slave of God. For ever and ever, Amen.

Say over clean water or wax taken from an icon and whisper over it, then wash the icon with the water and keep the wax with you or on your cross. (*Presumably, the person saying the prayer would have kept the runoff water from washing the icon in a container in a special place.*)

4. A prayer to prevent wounds, including those inflicted by torture

In the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit.

Just as the earth originated from the Higher God Sabaoth (*Lord God of Hosts*) and people of the created paradise came from Adam and Eve, and just as the Jews crucified Christ on a wooden post creating wounds, Sabaoth himself cast a spell from heaven over his one and only son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, through the Holy Spirit and prayer, torture, fire, fetters, wounds by ironstone, wounds by pincers, by rope, by noose, steel and sword, and by all types of animal hair, copper, and lead and razor-thin tin and every type of tall and strapping wooden post, every type of wounding blow and all the other torments on this earth. The true Christ, the heavenly king, dispatched

the miracle-working and unmercenary SS Cosmas and Damian from heaven on this day at this hour to cast a spell over me, the slave of God, to protect me against involuntary horrors, torture, fire, iron, wounds by ironstone, and wounds by razor-thin tin and every type of tall and strapping wooden post, and every type of wounding blow, and all the other torments on this earth. Just as the true Christ doesn't feel his Holy Spirit and himself, and torture, fire, fetters, wounds by ironstone, wounds by pincers, by rope, by noose, steel and sword, and by all types of animal hair, copper, and lead and razor-thin tin and every type of tall and strapping wooden post in his heart, body, bones, and sinews, so may I, the slave of God, not feel torture, fire, fetters, wounds by ironstone, wounds by pincers, by rope, by noose, steel and sword, and by all types of animal hair, copper, and lead and razor-thin tin and every type of tall and strapping wooden post, and every type of wounding blow in my heart, body, bones, and sinews, now and forever and for all eternity. Amen.

Say this over your own piss or over vodka.

5. An anti-love charm

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Having gotten up and made the sign of the cross, he, slave of God So-and-so, makes the sign of the cross as he goes out into an open field under the north wind. And below the north wind is a cage made of ice. And in that ice cage is a throne made of ice. And on the ice throne sits a man carved in ice and before him stand thirty-nine servants carved in ice. And he, slave of God So-and-so, prays to the ice man: "Oh, ice man, send me your thirty-nine ice servants, and the ice man dispatches the thirty-nine ice servants, and they come to an open field, and they order all four winds to blow the cold air of the north, so that this cold northern wind can chill the world of the baptized Orthodox people and the white flesh, hot blood, and sweet lips, so may I, slave of God So-and-so, be chilled and frigid before this slave of God So-and-so forever and ever. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Say over water in a passageway and drink and roll in it, or carry it away in something.

6. Psalm 151

1. I was small among my brothers,
and the youngest in my father's house;
I tended my father's sheep.
2. My hands made a harp;
my fingers fashioned a lyre.
3. And who will tell my Lord?
The Lord himself; it is he who hears.
4. It was he who sent his messenger
and took me from my father's sheep,
and anointed me with his anointing oil.
5. My brothers were handsome and tall,
but the Lord was not pleased with them.
6. I went out to meet the Philistine,
and he cursed me by his idols.
7. But I drew his own sword;
I beheaded him, and took away disgrace from the people of Israel.[25]

7. A prayer to attract a woman

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

O, if you the moon, clear stars and turbulent winds, water and earth and forest and grass, blue sea and fiery river drive out and dispatch grief, longing and great sorrows, a significant number of thoughts, and exceptional heartache from me, slave of God So-and-so, into the female slave So-and-so, so that she pines for that grief and yearns for that longing and great sorrows and cannot steam herself with birch twigs in the bathhouse or wash herself with water and pour water over herself; then neither her father nor her mother can help her, neither a sorcerer nor a sorceress can aid her, nor can she help herself, the female slave of God So-and-so, as long as she is unable to see me, observe me, and view me, the slave So-and-so, and as long as she is unable to live with me; may she not be able to eat, drink, sleep, lie down,

think, or be with her father, her mother, guests, or other people of any kind until she sees me.

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen.

Say this over a clean handkerchief twenty-seven times in a row, and then after a steambath, wave the handkerchief on the bench.

8. How to make a woman lustful

I shall arise without blessing myself, and without crossing myself I shall leave the hut not by the doors, I shall leave the yard not by the gates, but rather I shall go onto the broad street and I, slave So-and-so, shall look about the entire world, all around the earth and under the divine heavens and black clouds. Under the high heavens and black clouds, I, the slave So-and-so, shall see the fiery dragon with the glowing flame and fiery chariot. And I, slave So-and-so, shall cry out and I, slave So-and-so, shall ask you: Where did you fly with the fiery chariot and glowing flame? And the fiery dragon will say: "I flew to the seas and lakes at the other end of the world, and to the Babylonian kingdom to dry out the seas, lakes, and rivers and set ablaze the forests, stumps, and logs. And serve me, non-Christian renouncer of the world, and take me into your service. I shall carry out your will, and on Wednesdays and Fridays I shall excrete filth and on the days commemorating the dead I shall make fornication possible." And I, slave So-and-so, shall take my lust and flesh, youth and passions, and place them on a crystal mirror. With my lust and flesh and my youth and passions, on whichever day or in whichever hour or in whichever quarter of an hour, I will look in that mirror; then on that day and in that hour and in that quarter hour, you, dragon, will invigorate her, the female slave So-and-so's healthy body and white face and fire up her arduous heart, hot blood, fruit, strength, youth, and passion, and all her seventy veins and seventy joints and three, two, and one vessel(s), and her whole body. And the reflection in the mirror will belong to you, Dragon, while she, the female slave So-and-so, will belong to me with her body and heart, her mind and wits, her flesh and lust and all her sinews, so that she, the female slave So-and-so, will think about me, pine for me, grieve for me, long for me, and cry for me every day, every hour and every quarter of an hour.

And I, slave So-and-so, shall go further out into the open field, and will face the west with my back to the east. And just as the dawn Maria cannot stop herself from looking or glancing at her sister Ulianeia, and the sunset Ulianeia cannot stop herself from looking or glancing at her sister Maria, so may my female slave So-and-so not stop herself from looking or glancing at me every day, every hour, and every quarter of an hour.

And I shall go further out into the open field to the pagan sea. And on that pagan sea there is a plank, and on that plank sits Grief herself—without arms, without legs, and without a voice—and she is crying, grieving, and sobbing through her clear eyes and all around the world. And that grief and longing shall enter my slave So-and-so, so that she, the slave So-and-so, shall grieve and sob and cry for me for all eternity, from here to eternity. And just as wretched and bitter as that grief is on that plank, so that it will not see the light of the world, so shall my slave So-and-so be wretched and bitter so that when she, the slave So-and-so, doesn't see me on a particular day and at a particular hour and at a particular quarter of an hour, she shall grieve and sob, pine and cry during the day in the presence of the sun, at night in the presence of the moon, in the presence of dense stars and during violent storms, at dawn and at sunset, she shall not be able to drink, or eat, or say a word to someone; all she can do is think about, contemplate, yearn after, grieve for me, slave So-and-so.

And once again, I shall go out further and appear on an open field, and from the open field I shall go to the pagan sea, where our Satan himself with his brother-in-law Erzoul sits. Oh, tsar, devil Satan with your brother-in-law, thou art but a youth! Thou shalt give and send me your thirty-three minions all roused and fiery, including the demons (*not all of the following names can be translated*) Erzoul, Erokhmid, Marvs, Kriv (*One-eyed*), Tok and Matok, Kotyga and Matyga, Smushchalo (*Troublemaker*), Zazhigalo (*Inflamer*), Razzhigalo (*Rouser*), Potykalo (*Jabber*), Tial and Matial, Takusa and Marusa, Luk (*Cunning One*), Mirulei, Mirakha, Prochakha (*Emaciator*), and also Prodania (*Seller*), Tikhia and Sakhia and Elizuda and Dagrud, and Shchirikh (*Ugly One*) and all those thou controleth to concentrate their powers on that female slave So-and-so I so lust after.[26] I

shall summon you to me and send you to that female slave So-and-so; you shall go there and serve and obey your tsar father Satan with my thoughts, and with the shots of your sturdy bows and solid sharp and fiery broadswords you shall set on fire and shoot, disturb and rile up, and tempt this slave So-and-so, wherever you find her, in her room or in conversation during the day, on the path or along the road, or in the crystal mirror that reflects my image. I shall give my reflection to your father Satan and to you, demons, so that she will come to me, the slave So-and-so, with her body, soul, and heart and my thoughts.

"And we shall carry out your wish: on Wednesdays and Fridays we shall excrete filth and on days commemorating the dead we shall make fornication happen."

And my oath is locked in the mouth of a pike in the Don River and the lock's key may be found in the lap of the Groaner (Sostona—*nickname for the devil*) himself. For all eternity.

9. To send hernias or swellings (gryzhi) to people

I shall arise without blessing myself, and without crossing myself shall leave the hut not by the doors, I shall leave the yard not by the gates, and the foyer not by the foyer; rather I shall go out of the hut with smoke, fire, and steam and out of the yard by way of a wind, and I shall go out into an open field, where I shall stand facing west with my back to the east and shall look up at the sky and down at the earth. Open, wide earth, and create a deep hole and through there the evil, fierce, grave ailment of the bewitched and inflamed hernia shall exit. And I, slave So-and-so, shall scream: "Where have you flown, you evil, fierce, serpent-like, grave ailment of the bewitched and inflamed hernia?" And the hernia shall say to me: "I have flown beyond twenty-seven seas, rivers, and lakes to dry up the lakes and rivers and to drink out of the seas." And I, slave So-and-so, shall kneel down and pray thus: "O, you evil, serpent-like ailment of the bewitched and inflamed hernia, do not fly past twenty-seven seas, rivers, and lakes to dry up the lakes and rivers and drink out of the seas. Come here instead and fly into this other slave of God So-and-so's white body, passionate heart, and black liver,

in all seventy of his veins and seventy joints, and three and two and one tendons, eat his body, chew on his bones, bite his brains, incessantly during the day, without peace at night, for all twenty-four hours, for all its quarter-hours and minutes. And I shall again kneel down and pray thus: "O, you evil, fierce, serpent-like grave ailment of the inflamed hernia! Do not fly to the tall mountains and deep caves, to the Babylonian kingdom of burning logs and smashed stones. Fly instead, you evil, fierce, grave illness of the inflamed hernia into this other slave So-and-so, into his white body, his bones and brain, and tear his body apart, chew on his bones, and drink his blood incessantly during the day and at night, for all twenty-four hours, quarter-hours, and minutes."

Once again, I, slave of God So-and-so, shall go out and shall go further on the open field to the pagan sea, to the pagan island. On that island is a red bloody stone and on that stone sits the fierce, grave illness of the inflamed hernia. And I, slave So-and-so, shall say: "O you fierce, grave illness of the inflamed hernia, do not chew the red stone, but chew this other slave of God So-and-so's white body, his passionate heart, bones, and brain. Now and forever more."

With these words I lock the spell, and the hernia will gnaw at you. I place the key in the lap of Satan himself. For all eternity.

10. Prayer against hernias, swellings, and other illnesses caused by sorcery

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. Holy, saintly, unmercenary Cosmas and Damian, join me in my good deed and listen to my good words! Lord God, between this whole world and the hereafter there is a holy and delightful ocean-sea, and on that sea is a white island, and on that island lives a tsar with his tsaritsa, who feed three hundred black wolves and three hundred white wolves every type of herbal root. And you are to gather the three hundred black wolves and three hundred white wolves with every type of herbal root for this slave of God So-and-so. And the tsar together with the tsaritsa shall say to those wolves: O, three hundred black wolves and three hundred white wolves with every type of herbal root, gather together in one spot for this slave of God So-and-so and extract every

hernia and malevolent swelling, twinge and ache, evil eye and other illnesses caused by witchcraft, and malevolent people's designs from this slave of God So-and-so's liver and his core and his heart and his main vertical and horizontal bones and his main veins. O, three hundred black wolves and three hundred white wolves with herbal roots of every type, gather together in one spot and extract from this slave of God So-and-so's liver, core, heart, all of the main vertical and horizontal bones, seventy veins, seventy members, and arteries every hernia and malevolent swelling, twinge and ache, regardless of what has ripened in him, whether as a result of water or the wind, a stone or God's grace, or a great many prior weaknesses or human designs, or a sorcerer or a sorceress or a witch, or a male or female practitioner of black magic, or male or female sorcerers,[27] or flax fibers, or potions, or teeth, or manipulation of herbs, or divination by casting bones. May God give him, the slave of God So-and-so, the gentleness of a sparrow, the fury of a stallion, and the passion of a cock. And just as every herbal root doesn't cease to grow or just as garlic doesn't cease to smell, may this slave of God So-and-so not lose his youth and virility this day and this hour, always, now and forever and for all eternity. Amen.

11. A prayer to protect a man's virility

In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I, slave of God So-and-so, shall stand, and having blessed and crossed myself, shall go out either at dawn or dusk into a broad courtyard. Just as the oak and ash posts of the gate stand, may this slave of God So-and-so's seventy veins, seventy membranes, and main member stand, and may the white, flushed, and vigorous members go into every vast hole in a woman or a maiden, a young man, the buttocks, and vulva every day and every hour, day or night, morning or evening. For all eternity. Amen.

Say this at three dawns and three dusks, go out into the yard and read it over the post where the gate opens.

Chapter 11

SPECIALISTS IN MAGIC

Witchcraft accusations often voiced long-standing hostilities within communities or allowed aggrieved or grieving people to find explanations for their hurt and loss. The accusations themselves could transform perfectly ordinary exchanges of food or drink, of advice and healing herbal infusions, into hard evidence of sorcery, and once accused, the suspects had no choice but to embrace the ignominious title foisted on them by their neighbors, by the judges, and by the experts in the torture chamber. The same dynamic, the creation of a "witch" through word of mouth alone, is seen in witchcraft prosecution across early modern Europe. In *The Witch of Edmonton*, the famous English play of 1621, Mother Sawyer, the eponymous witch of the story, spits at her accusers when asked if she is a witch:

> *I am none.*
> *None but base curs so bark at me; I'm none:*
> Or would I were! if every poor old woman
> Be trod on thus by slaves, reviled, kicked, beaten,
> As I am daily, she to be revenged
> Had need turn witch.[1]

Not all accusations, however, were equally baseless. In the three entries collected in this chapter, the sources offer compelling evidence that the accused parties actually practiced some kind of magical work: healing and cursing; protecting crops by untying knots in grain; and identifying criminals through divination. The three instances of magical practitioners at work presented in this chapter come from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, respectively: two are from the Ukrainian region, and one is from the Russian North. They were heard in a range of secular and religious courts and by representatives of local and central administrations. Across the three, similar issues surface. The authorities and the accused in their statements expressed concern about whether or not the practitioners accepted payment for the work and about how they learned or received their skills. In each case, and in several others represented earlier in this collection, there remains little question that the accused did practice some form of magic and did so with enough frequency and publicity to qualify as "professionals" (in a loose sense of the word), whether or not they identified themselves as witches. Whether they deserved the torture and harsh punishments they often received, at least into the mid-eighteenth century, is, of course, a very different kind of question.

11.1 SPECIALISTS IN PLANTS AND ROOTS: POISONING AND HEALING IN CONSULTATION WITH A PROFESSIONAL HERBALIST (1692)

Source: RGADA, f. 159, op. 3, no. 4208, ll. 1–13. We are grateful to Aleksandr Lavrov for sharing his transcription of the archival file and unpublished commentary with us. His commentary informs our introduction.[2]

At the end of the seventeenth century, the northern port city of Archangel was the "window to Europe" for the Muscovite state.[3] Not coincidentally, the various men appointed to serve as governors there were distinguished by their mastery of foreign languages and their previous experience interacting with foreigners. Governor Andrei Artamonovich Matveev (1666–1728) exemplified these skills. The son of the leading boyar Artamon Sergeevich Matveev, former head of the Ambassadorial Chancellery and one-time chief adviser of Tsar Aleksei Mikhailovich, and of a Russified Scottish woman, Evdokia Hamilton, Andrei Artamonovich was a keen political and administrative innovator and a significant diplomat.

Andrei Artamonovich, who refers to himself in his exchanges with Moscow by the demeaning diminutive "Andriushka," turns out to be the most interesting figure in this document. As author of this report and as administrator, Andrei Artamonovich found himself involuntarily responsible for conducting this witchcraft trial. He had good reason to be uncomfortable with the situation. About a decade and a half earlier, Andrei's own father had fallen under suspicion in a scandal in which witchcraft charges were mixed together with political ones. The unfortunate Matveev senior fell from grace after the death of his tsarist patron in 1676 and was exiled to the Far North along with his son Andrei. Among the charges leveled against him were accusations that Artamon had summoned spirits with the aid of foreign magicians and through the use of foreign books.[4] His comfort in interacting with European merchants and diplomats and his interest in imported books, which had facilitated his rise through the ranks, thus ultimately contributed to his terrible demise. Allowed back to Moscow with yet another regime change six years later, the elder Matveev survived only four days in the capital. Still tainted by rumors of sorcery, he was targeted by an enraged crowd during the musketeers' rebellion of 1682 and suffered the dreadful fate of being hacked to pieces.

Matveev Junior is sometimes credited with authorship of "*A History of the Guiltless Imprisonment … of Artamon Sergeevich Matveev*," a kind of apology for his father. Included in the account were the petitions that his father wrote to defend himself against the accusations leveled against him. As the historian Aleksandr Lavrov notes, considering the specific characteristics of the Muscovite state, where no public discourse about witchcraft was conducted, "*A History*" has to be recognized as one of the very few protests against trials of witches and other political trials, even in light of the fact that this text was not published in Matveev's lifetime.

As the case record below illustrates, Andrei Matveev experienced two radically distinct roles in witch trials during his lifetime: on one hand, he suffered as collateral victim of a witchcraft trial (he was exiled together with his father in 1676); on the other hand, he served as judge, passing judgment in the witch trial presented here. Adding a further level of complexity, his involvement with this case was multifaceted: not only did he serve as judge, but one of the accused was a servant of his own slave (yes, his slave apparently had a servant of his own!).

In his capacity as judge, Matveev played a neutral role, passing information up to his superiors and requesting an opinion from the Novgorodian Chancellery (a regional administrative unit with jurisdiction over part of the Russian North) on how to rule in the case. The Novgorodian Chancellery then sent Matveev's correspondence on to the

Kremlin. Lavrov notes that Matveev had to deal with witchcraft trials on more than one occasion later in his career, when he served as president of the College of Justice (from 1719). However, the relevant archival material remains unstudied to this day.

The case report is one of the few in which Muscovite judges referred to specific articles of law in justifying their conclusions and sentencing. Since the 1649 *Sobornoe Ulozhenie* (see Document 3.8) contained no explicit proscriptions against witchcraft per se, the judges had to make do with other statutes that could apply to the situation. Excerpts from chapter 22, article 8, of the *Sobornoe Ulozhenie*, "Concerning intention to kill someone whom one serves," and chapter 23, "Concerning poisoning," were inserted into the official record, followed by excerpts from Byzantine and church law. It is interesting that the officials invoked the prohibition against "intention to kill someone whom one serves" even in this case, where the "master" happened to be a slave. This puzzle points out the labyrinthine convolutions of the Muscovite social order. Fekolka is described as the "*rabotnitsa*"—that is, female worker or servant—of Grigorii Tolmachev, who was a slave (*kholop*) belonging to Andrei Artamonovich. Although she was of low social status—lower than a slave—she was not a slave herself.

One final aspect of this exceptionally interesting case explains its placement in this final chapter. The chief suspect, the musketeer Ivashko Goldobin, pursued a serious sideline as a healer in Novgorod. Not the kind of amateur dabbler we have encountered in many of the previous instances, nor a specialist in a single kind of ailment or expert with a single plant or root, Goldobin kept an impressive pharmacopeia in his home and quite clearly practiced healing for profit. This finding made him particularly vulnerable to an accusation of witchcraft. Although it would be anachronistic to call him a "professional"—with all of the training, certification, and forms of personal identity that term entails—Goldobin must have earned a tidy addition to his musketeer's salary through his busy practice.

Report of Dvina Governor Andrei Artamonovich Matveev to Tsars Ivan and Peter Alekseevich about an accusation of witchcraft (*koldovstvo*) brought against the musketeer Ivan Goldobin, musketeer's wife Fedosia Belousikha, and Fekla (Fekolka), servant of the slave Grigorii Tolmachev, between January 10 and 18, 1692

To the Great Sovereign Tsars and Grand Princes Ivan Alekseevich and Peter Alekseevich, Autocrats of All Great, Little, and White Russia, your slave Andriushka Matveev petitions. In the present year 1692, on February 2, I sent a report to you, Great Sovereigns, in Moscow via the Novgorodian Chancellery, in response to your order, Great Sovereigns, which had been sent from the Novgorodian Chancellery to me, your slave, in Dvina with the signature of the clerk Andrei Vinius.[5] The directive instructed me to torture

harshly the musketeer Ivashka Goldobin to find out who taught him about using grasses, and if he has practiced any other kind of sorcery, and whether he poisoned anyone with grasses previously, and whether anyone died from this poisoning. [And I was to interrogate him to discover] under what circumstances he, Ivashka, gave those plants or grasses to the servant of my man Grishka and to the musketeer's wife Fedoska, and previous to this did he give grasses to anyone else?

And likewise, I was ordered to torture harshly the musketeer's wife Fedoska Belousikha and the servant of my man Grishka Tolmachev, about how they became acquainted with Ivashko, and whether she, Fedoska, gave those grasses that they took from him to anyone else, and whether she bewitched anyone or poisoned anyone. And last January on the tenth day of this year 1692, I was ordered to send an account of the interrogation to you, Great Sovereigns, in Moscow. Following a communication from the local administrative offices, Ivashka Goldobin's house was searched, and under the shed in the barn under the wooden flooring they found a round birchbark box covered with dirt, containing some grasses and roots, and those grasses and roots were sent to the court house. And when questioned about them, Ivashko said:

> That birchbark box and those grasses that were pulled out from under the wooden flooring in the barn at his house are his, Ivashko's, and he hid them himself, having heard that the woman Fekonka (*diminutive of Fekonia*), the servant of my man Grishka Tolmachev, had been taken to the courthouse. In that box, in a little sack, is an herb called *vasilishnik*, good for sore throat. You steam it in water. And in another little sack is ground up *deviatil'nik* grass,[6] good against worms (*volosatki*).[7] In the third little sack is another ground-up grass of the nettle family, for scabies or itching (*svorob*). In the fourth little sack is another ground-up grass called *polyn (Artemisia, usually translated from Russian and Ukrainian as* wormwood). You steam it to cure hernias. And tied up in a little rag is another grass to use against worms, called "*kom* grasses," and when that grass is crumbled up, the seed is used for diseases of the cheek. And whoever has a canker of the cheek should use those grasses, not ground up, and also for throat ailments. The bundle of roots is to treat heart disease. He collected those grasses and roots out in the fields ten or more years ago, and every year since then, in the summer, around St. John's and St. Elijah's Days (*June 24 and July 20, respectively*).
>
> He learned [his craft] in Kevrola Province, Chakolsk District, from a peasant named Elfimko, son of Selivan Sobolev, about twenty years ago or more. He would go to Elfimko's house. But, he said, that Elfimko died, also around twenty years ago or more. In the twenty years since then,

> he, Ivashko, has been giving those and other grasses and roots to all ranks of people, people whose names he doesn't remember. Wherever there were weddings, he would attend those weddings to protect [the couple against evil witchcraft], carrying with him in his sleeve bread and salt separately. He would sit near the bridegroom, in the host's place, and mutter whispered spells at anyone who approached the groom.

He said he gave grass and a root to the woman Fekolka on the road across from the state secretary's house in the present year 1692, and he gave them to Fedoska about a year ago at the time of St. Peter's fast (*between a week after Trinity and June 29*). He gave [the root and grasses] to them at their request, but has no other acquaintance with them.

That same Ivashko was raised on the rack and tortured, and with hoisting and torture, he said:

> The grasses that he gave to those women, Fekolka and Fedoska, he learned about from a man from Kevrola named Elfimko Sobolev, and those grasses he took from the field himself, and those grasses and roots that he gave to the women Fekolka and Fedoska were not the same ones that were found in the birchbark box and brought [to court]. But he has more of those same grasses and roots, the ones he gave to the women Fekolka and Fedoska, hidden at his house, behind a rock tucked in under the eaves in his courtyard, in two knotted packages.

And searchers were sent to Ivashko's house, and those grasses and roots were found and brought to the courthouse, and were shown to Ivashko Goldobin in the torture chamber. When he saw them, he said those were the same grasses and roots that he gave to the women Fekolka and Fedoska, and he hid them carefully in his house because, he said, those grasses and roots were deadly poisonous. He said he didn't give those grasses to any other people at all other than those two women Fekolka and Fedoska, and aside from that, he didn't poison anyone and he didn't kill anyone.

And the women Fekolka and Fedoska were tortured, each separately, with the same torture, and were questioned extensively and with threats and violence (*s pristrastiem*), and then hoisted on the rack. And with hoisting, Fekolka said that she took grasses from Ivashka Goldobin across from the clerk's office with the intention of killing her master and mistress. She also took some grass, that which she had with her when she was arrested, from the musketeer's wife Fedoska Belousikha. She got it from her at her house in this year 1692. She, the musketeer's daughter, the girl Fekolka Ivanova, told

the woman [Fedoska] about Ivashko Goldobin. She told her that Ivashko keeps grasses to treat diseases, and [Fedoska] asked the girl for some grasses, because at that time she suffered from a leg problem. But according to the girl's report, she hadn't gotten any grasses from Ivashko for that particular disease of the leg, and aside from that deadly grass, she didn't have any other grasses of any kind. And she didn't have any further acquaintance with Ivashko after that. And she got to know the woman Fedoska Belousikha while washing clothes in the Dvina River, when she, Fekolka, was coming back with her master from Kholmogory.

And the musketeer's wife Fedoska Belousikha was likewise hoisted on the rack, and she said she got the grass that she gave to Fekolka from Ivashko Goldobin at his house during St. Peter's fast about three years earlier. She was acquainted with him because she, Fedoska, was a resident of the same town as he. She got to know the woman Fekolka at the Dvina River while they were washing clothes. She never took any other grasses from Ivashko and she never poisoned or bewitched anyone, and she never gave those grasses to anyone other than the woman Fekolka.

And at present he, Ivashko Goldobin, and the women Fekolka and Fedoska have been placed under guard as previously, as we await your Great Sovereigns' order. And I, your slave, will do in this matter whatever you, Great Sovereigns, order.

(Then follow excerpts from chapter 22, article 8, of the 1649 Sobornoe ulozhenie*, "Concerning intention to kill someone whom one serves," and chapter 23, "Concerning poisoning." These excerpts were copied into the case record by someone in the Novgorodian Chancellery.*

A directive from the co-rulers, Tsars Peter and Ivan, was brought to Andrei Matveev in Dvina, telling him to torture Ivan Goldobin to make him explain from whom he learned about grasses and to answer whether or not he had poisoned anyone previously.

*After this, a new extract was made from relevant legal documents. These included a passage from the "*Gradskii zakon*," the Byzantine civil law, that stated "If someone works sorcery [*charodeianie*] in order to harm a person or keeps [any magical spells or materials] for himself or for sale, then that*

person should be tortured according to the law like a murderer." A passage from the Rules of the Holy Fathers *was also copied out: "Enchanters or sorcerers are like murderers." The* Gradskii zakon *was quoted in another witchcraft trial some twenty-five years earlier [See the second document in 3.1], but the reference to the* Rules of the Holy Fathers *seems to be unique to this case. It does not appear in other witchcraft trials.*

The case was concluded with an order from the co-tsars Peter and Ivan Alekseevich dated April 4, 1692, according to which Ivan Goldobin, musketeer of Kholmogory, the musketeer's wife Fedosia Belousikha, and Fekolka, servant of the slave Grigorii Tolmachev, were sentenced to knouting on the trestle, with subsequent exile to the fort of Pustozersk for the rest of their lives, where they were to live under the supervision of other people who signed sureties for them, guaranteeing that in the future they would not engage in sorcery again.)

11.2 SPOILING A HARVEST BY MEANS OF WITCHCRAFT: KNOTTED GRAIN STALKS—A RELUCTANT SPECIALIST (HETMANATE, 1765)

Source: TsDIAK Ukrainy, f. 990, op.1, spr. 535 (1765), ark. 5–8.
Translated from Ukrainian by Kateryna Dysa. We are grateful to Dysa for also sharing her transcription of the archival document.

According to ethnographic materials from the late nineteenth century, knots in edible plants and grain (called *zakrutki*) as well as stalks broken by means of witchcraft were commonly found in forests, orchards, and gardens but more often in grain fields in and around Ukrainian villages. It was believed that a witch would visit the field or other area around dawn. To make herself more conducive to evil spirits, she would remove her protective head cover and most of her clothing, except for her shirt, and untie her hair. Holding the stalks and ears with her right hand, she would proceed to twist and tie down the tops with her left hand in the direction of the sun, putting evil spells on the knots. The

witch's malefaction would blight the crops and make them dangerous for human consumption.

Nineteenth-century ethnographers reported seeing such knots of grain, indicating that this was not simply a widespread belief but also a rather common practice. It was already so common in the early seventeenth century that the Mohyla *trebniki* or "books of needs" (which originated in the early seventeenth century and remained popular thereafter in Ukrainian areas) contained special religious services dedicated to the problem. During the ceremony, which took place in the affected field, a priest would not only chant prayers but also uproot the knots with a large cross. Lay persons, male and female, also specialized in undoing the knots with the aid of Christian prayers. Some of these practicing "antiwitchers" maintained or battled reputations as witches and sorcerers as well. As the following eighteenth-century case suggests, these specialists were believed to have inherited their knowledge from others, usually relatives.[8] It also offers insight into one woman's reluctant acceptance of the community's expectations regarding her inherited powers and into the conflicting attitudes toward such practices on the part of members of the clergy.

The following case occurred at a critical time in the history of Orthodox monasteries in the Russian Empire, because of Catherine the Great's policy of secularizing monastic lands. By a decree dated February 26, 1764, she transferred approximately nine million hectares of land and almost a million serf souls to the state's ownership under the administration of the Senate's Economic College. However, because the Ukrainian lands of the Hetmanate enjoyed special autonomous status at the time, the secularization of monasteries in that region was postponed until April 10, 1786, well after the dissolution of direct Ukrainian rule in 1667 and subsequent complete disbandment of the Hetmanate in 1775. The following case unfolded on the landholdings of a prominent Ukrainian monastery that depended on the labor of peasants, many of whom were dispossessed Cossacks. This would explain why the investigation of a suspected case of witchcraft was left entirely in the hands of religious authorities. While owing labor obligations to the monastery, various taxes to support military forces in the Hetmanate, and the state's poll tax beginning in 1765, these monastic peasants still enjoyed freedom of movement until May 1783. Their complete enserfment occurred with the secularization of the monasteries in 1786, when they joined the ranks of other state-owned peasants in the realm, owing the Russian imperial government a cash obligation in place of labor dues and, in the case of men, military service for life on the basis of a well-developed conscription system.

Some of the documents pertaining to the case must have been lost. The archival record of the case begins midstream with an unenlightening reference to "this matter," without any context, buildup, or explanation. Still, the reader will have no difficulty figuring out the nature of the situation.

Consistory of Pereiaslav and Boryspil, October 7, 1765

Since this matter requires investigation by religious authorities, this order requesting that the monks seek out information about the above-mentioned

woman, a witch, is being sent to the St. Michael the Archangel Monastery in Pereiaslav. Any information about witchcraft should then be immediately dispatched to the consistory.[9]

On October 7, 1765, the monk Iosysap sent a message from the economic office of the village Godunivka to the consistory. In it he declared that around June 10 of this [past] year, Aleksii Lytvyn, an inhabitant of Godunivka, found knotted stalks in his rye field, which someone had made with the help of witchcraft. When Lytvyn discovered the knotted stalks, he became suspicious and sought out a woman living in the village Zhuravki, which belonged to the St. Michael the Archangel Monastery (*to get her to undo the destructive magic of the knot*).

The name and surname of that woman are unknown. When she disabled the knots, Lytvyn undoubtedly harvested those same rye stalks, stored them, and ordered that bread be made from them. When his family ate the bread, they became seriously ill; ultimately Lytvyn's children died, and he barely survived.

The religious authorities decided to send an order to the St. Michael the Archangel Monastery, requesting that the monks question the above-mentioned woman about the witchcraft involved and then send her testimony to them.

October 1765 testimonies of Matrona before the consistory

On October 22, 1765, Matrona, the wife of Hrytsko Lytvyn, an inhabitant of Zhuravki, was dispatched from the St. Michael the Archangel Monastery to the consistory (*located in the Ascension [*Voznesens'kyi*] Monastery*) where she was questioned. She testified:

Her name is Matrona, she is thirty. She was born on the farm belonging to the widow Bykhovchykha in the Chernihiv regiment. Her parents, Petro and Agrypyna Lytvyn, were dependent tenant laborers on that farm. Her father disappeared when she was very young, and she doesn't remember him. Her mother and older brother stayed on the farm for another year. Then her mother and brother, along with Matrona, moved from the farm to the village Lozova, which belonged to Pereiaslav's Ascension Monastery.

Then she, along with her mother and brother, moved to the village Godunivka, which also belonged to the same monastery. Her mother told her to marry Hrytsko Lytvyn, an inhabitant of the village Zhuravki, which belonged to Pereiaslav's St. Michael the Archangel Monastery. After the wedding, she moved to the monastery's domains and until now has been living in the neighborhood of Zhuravki. After she had served the monastery for ten years, a widow named Levchykha Okhremenkova, a resident of Godunivka, came to her for some reason. Levchykha declared that she had found sheaves of wheat made into specific types of knot and she asked her, Matrona, to go to her field and undo them. But, she, Matrona, did not know how to undo such knots or anything about witchcraft. She reasoned that because such knots were made by people who had some knowledge of witchcraft, disaster might befall Levchykha or her if she tried to undo those knots without knowing how to do the task properly. She answered that she was afraid to undo those knots and did not want to do so. But Levchykha told her that because Matrona's mother (who at that time was so old that she could hardly walk and who lived in the village Teplivka) allegedly knew how to undo such knots, Matrona must know how to do so as well. Levchykha went to the now deceased monk Theophylact and asked him to order Matrona to undo the knots. And the monk came with Levchykha to Matrona's to persuade her. However, Matrona again replied that she was afraid of the disaster that might befall her or Levchykha, if she undid the knots without having knowledge of witchcraft and refused to do so. And she sent Levchykha away. As she left crying, Levchykha said that her wheat would spoil because she was afraid to harvest it, fearing that some disaster inflicted by witchcraft would occur. After she left, the monk voiced concern that the woman's wheat would spoil. And he said to Matrona: "Don't worry about a disaster befalling you or that woman, Levchykha. Go to her field and say all the prayers that you know to appease your Creator. Don't undo the knots, just pull the entire stalks up by the roots. Then rinse them in the river and burn them. Tell Levchykha to hope for God's assistance and not to expect any disaster." That is why she, Matrona, went to Levchykha's field that very day and did as that monk told her: she pulled the offending stalks

up by the roots, rinsed them in the river, and burned them. Then she met Levchykha and told her to harvest the wheat and eat it. Neither Levchykha nor her children were harmed by the wheat. She and all her family members are still alive.

After that incident, people learned that she, Matrona, had disabled the knots in Levchykha's wheat field, and for the next ten years people from Zhuravki and other nearby villages who had knots in their fields came to her and asked her to tear up the stalks. However, she did not comply with everyone's requests: for instance, those of Fedor Dvernia, the widow Horpyna Chornomurykha, and Iakov Tsypel, who were residents of the village Bohdanivka, although she did tell them to leave the knotted stalks alone when they harvested their fields and that they were not to be afraid. She went to the grain fields of the following residents of Godunivka: Pavlo Khyzhniany, Hrytsko, and Ocheretchyn's son-in-law Vasyl Strylchenko; and the following inhabitants of Zhuravki: Mykhailo Pohrebnyi, Andrii Holovachenko, Natalia Matushchykha, Fedor Zamory, and Prokop Prokopyi. She tore up the knotted stalks while saying familiar prayers, and then she told these people to harvest their grain. They did so, ate food made from the grain, and did not suffer harm.

And during this year's harvest, when Aleksii Lytvyn of Godunivka found knotted rye stalks in two of his fields, he invited her to come. She dealt with them in the same manner as she had before: she rooted them out and told him it was all right for him to eat the rye. Afterward, three of his children died, and she doesn't know if they died from the rye or some other cause. After their deaths, on August 28, the sexton Iakov and the officer Vasyl Komar came to her from Godunivka, saying that Godunivka's priest Father Luke had sent them to fetch her. So she went to him. When she came to the priest's house, she found him reading and preparing for the service. When he saw her, he told his sexton to take her to the churchyard and to shackle her. And the sexton did so.

She stayed shackled the whole day. At night the sexton freed her and took her to his house. The next day, she was shackled again and remained there until midday. Then the priest came and asked her without applying torture

if she knew any witchcraft and if she used it when she pulled up the knotted grain stalks. And then he asked her the same questions under torture. She declared that she didn't know any witchcraft; she only tore up the knotted stalks after saying a prayer. Then she rinsed them in water and burned them. The priest forbade her from doing this anymore and let her return home.

On October 26 of the same year, the vicar Manaskia and the steward Irodion came to Zhuravki from Periaslavl's St. Michael the Archangel Monastery. The vicar summoned Matrona to the courtyard and ordered the local resident Fedor, a dependent laborer on the lands belonging to the monastery, to take her to the consistory, which he did.

She, Matrona, doesn't know any witchcraft and spells, and she did not learn witchcraft from witches, and she doesn't know if there are any witches nearby. She can only say some prayers: The Lord's Prayer, "O, Heavenly King," the Trisagion, the Jesus Prayer, the Creed, "Rejoice, O Virgin Birthgiver."[10] She never took any payment for getting rid of the knotted stalks in their grain fields, because the monk who directed her to tear out those stalks also told her not to take anything from the people on whose fields they were found.

After the priest Luke forbade her from doing this sort of work, three inhabitants of Zhuravki asked her to rip out the knotted stalks in their fields, but she refused. And she is not going to pull knotted stalks up by the roots any more, as long as she lives. She confessed to all this and affixed her signature.

(A consistory member signed the confession in place of the illiterate Matrona.)

11.3 CASE AGAINST A FOURTEEN-YEAR-OLD BOY FOR FRAUDULENT DIVINATION (RUSSIAN UKRAINE, 1839)

Source: State Archive of Zhytomyr Region (GAZhO), f. 21, op. 1, spr. 8, art. 57–65; transcribed and published in Valentyna Shandra, "Sovisnyi sud v Ukraini kintsia XVIII–pershoi polovyny XIX stolittia: Struktura, sudovi praktyky ta arkhivni fondy," *Ukrains'kyi arkheohrafichnyi sbirnyk* 16/17, nos. 13/14 (2009): 546–50. Translated from Russian.

This case from the early nineteenth-century Ukrainian province of Volynia/Volhynia, then under Russian control, is unusual in that it involved the investigation of claims that a minor was peddling phony fortune-telling skills. It thus came under the purview of a court of equity, as opposed to some other kind of court, for two reasons: both a minor and witchcraft were involved. In seventeenth-century Western European witch trials, children most often appeared as victims of witchcraft, and sometimes as witnesses for the prosecution (famously so in the Salem cases in colonial North America), but only rarely did they offer confessions of practicing magic or witchcraft.[11] In this instance, the young teenager and serf Iakov Pidgaichuk/Pidhaichuk instead attracted an adult audience from near and far through his rumored skills of being able to divine the identity of thieves and arsonists and make predictions about the future. Like other diviners, he undoubtedly picked up information from those who sought his help by asking questions about neighbors' identities and individuals with whom they had quarreled and used that information to identify potential thieves, but never by name. This deliberate mystification protected the diviner should he make a mistake. Despite his vagueness on the precise identities of the guilty parties, his cryptic hints unleashed rumors about the supposed criminals, rumors that could spread and cast doubts on potentially innocent persons' reputations. Given the frequent occurrence of fire in Ukrainian and Russian villages and the economic devastation that it caused to individual households, a suspicion of arson against an individual was particularly charged with emotion and fear. Restoring one's reputation in a community after being suspected of arson would have been extremely difficult. The boy's mysterious innuendos about the identities of criminals and arsonists could therefore cause real and lasting damage, and it is not surprising that his work won him enemies who turned him in to the authorities.

The scribe in this case that came before the Volynia court of equity in August 1839 appears to have been fairly proficient with the pen. His summary takes on a bit of a polemical tone as he uses the language of the law to paint an unfavorable picture of the child diviner and to underscore the ignorance of the boy's clients.

By order of His Imperial Highness and according to the laws under its jurisdiction, on August 18, 1839, the Volynia court of equity heard a suit regarding the fourteen-year-old boy Iakov Ignatii Pidgaichuk/Iakov Ihnatyi Pidhaichuk. The case had come before the Rovno/Rivne district court this past May 30 and then was transferred to this court because of the boy's false predictions. The following is clear from the case. On March 9 of this year,

Orel, an officer of the second district police office in Rovno District, delivered the peasant boy Iakov Pidgaichuk to the local land court from the confiscated estate of the village Glinok/Hlynok together with the denunciation that this boy is dispensing false and absurd comments in the form of fortune-telling and predictions, as a result of which a significant number of naive people from various places are coming to him for information about lost objects and predictions about the future. Although the police officer ordered the boy to desist from such actions, he has not stopped dispensing false information.

Under questioning, the fourteen-year-old boy testified before the court that he was very ill before Christmas and was unconscious for three days. Subsequently, he felt that he had acquired the spirit and ability to tell fortunes and make predictions. At first, he identified for his master, the peasant Boiarchuk, the name of the thief who stole hemp cloth and chickens from him, and through divination he identified the perpetrators of various thefts for other peasants.

Consequently, the land court tried to come to a decision about the boy by focusing upon the status of his health. In response to this demand, the district medic said that while at first and during questioning Pidgaichuk didn't show signs of illness, his eyes and speech, nevertheless, did suggest some brain malfunction. The medic accordingly asked the court to send the boy to a town hospital for a six-week examination to make a more definitive assessment of his health. The land court acquiesced and dispatched Pidgaichuk on March 12 to the hospital in the town of Rovno. At the same time, it ordered District Officer Orel to undertake a local investigation into Pidgaichuk's behavior, his relationships, his way of life, and the general circumstances raised in his testimony. The district medic informed the land court that during the six-week examination of Pidgaichuk, the boy did not manifest any type of illness and asked that the court remove the lad from the nearby town hospital and dispatch him where he belongs.

During the investigation the following local people were questioned and testified without taking oaths:

(a) Marina/Maryna Trofimova Pidgaichukova, the mother of the defendant, who had been widowed for seven years, a peasant of the village Glinok, said that because of insufficient means to bring up her children, she had sent one of her four children, the defendant Iakov Pidgaichuk, to work for Efim Boiarchuk on September 14, 1838, the day of the celebration of the Exaltation of the Cross. During the fall harvesting, he worked in the grain fields, and during the winter he looked after the livestock, during which time he did not have any special relationships or acquaintances with people. When he was free from work or on holidays, he kept company with peasant boys his age. Meanwhile, on December 1 in that year of 1838, before dawn, his master Efim Boiarchuk woke Iakov Pidgaichuk up and ordered him to give the livestock some hay. Although the boy was able to get off the bench, he went into the barn as though he were still asleep and collapsed; he remained in that death-like state for two hours. When he came around, he was carried from the barn to the hut. After staying in bed for two days, he felt better, got up, and began to talk about dead people and the like. It was as if he were someone experiencing melancholy and weakened nerves. That's when he began to present himself as a cunning man, telling his master and other peasants details about their lost objects.

Absurd rumors were broadcast in neighboring villages. As a result, a significant number of people from all over the place came to Pidgaichuk and asked him to make divinations about their lost items and about their future marital status. Even though he made essentially worthless claims, those who came to him in a steady stream believed his nonsense and stories out of ignorance and thought him to be clairvoyant.

(b) Efim Martynov Boiarchuk testified that the boy Pidgaichuk did serve him during the attested time and had succumbed to illness. He upheld the testimony of the boy's mother, Marina, concerning the circumstances accompanying that illness as well as the predictions that Pidgaichuk subsequently made.

(c) Ten peasants of that village explained under oath that they knew the peasant boy Pidgaichuk to be a good person, and until December 1, 1838, they had neither witnessed nor heard anything reprehensible about him

with regard to his conduct, relationships, and actions. Thereafter, because of the stories of his mother, Marina Pidgaichukova, and the peasant Efim Boiarchuk, for whom the boy worked, it became common knowledge that Iakov Pidgaichuk had experienced some unusual illness and was unconscious for two hours, after which he began to dispense information and predictions in the manner of a sorcerer. Due to the rumors, a large number of people came from afar to the village Glinok to see Pidgaichuk, and the ignorant folk in particular became fascinated with his superstitions and stories.

In preliminary questioning in the Rovno district court, the defendant Pidgaichuk upheld his previous testimony in full and gave a signed statement attesting to his honesty during the questioning. According to the last revision (*a type of census*), he was registered in the village Glinok as being nine years old, which means that he is now thirteen.

In a case before the (*neighboring*) Ostrog/Ostroh land court it was discovered that when the Ostrog police chief was carrying out his duties in the village Ivachkovo in February of this year 1839, the peasant Ivan Dobrovolskii complained that six weeks earlier a fire had mysteriously occurred in the village Ivachkovo and destroyed Pantaleimon Gumeniuk's/Humeniuk's home. Wishing to know what had caused his home to burn down, Gumeniuk on two separate occasions had gone on horseback to the village Glinok to see some peasant lad, who according to rumors knew how to find all lost objects and identify crimes through divination. Subsequently rumors spread that the boy blamed the arson on an [unnamed] resident of Ivachkovo who owned gray horses and a speckled ox. Dobrovolskii's father and also he, Gumeniuk, each have gray horses and an ox, but not a speckled one. The peasant Oleksei Stupak said that either Dobrovolskii's father or the son was responsible for the arson, to which Dobrovolskii responded that neither he nor his son were guilty. To clear his name, Dobrovolskii Jr. went with the peasants Gumeniuk and Stupak to see the diviner.

When they were in the home where the alleged diviner was supposed to be, they found one peasant woman and two lads. The younger one, who

wasn't more than twelve years old, sat at the table eating porridge. When he finished his meal, he jumped on the bed and started to toss and turn, not saying a word to anybody. Finally, after a long period of silence the boys' mother went out into the yard, and Stupak followed her out on the pretext of having to feed the horses. They were out there for several minutes. Upon the mother's return, Dobrovolskii and Gumeniuk demanded that her son repeat the arsonist's name. The lad, who had eaten the porridge, said looking right at Dobrovolskii (*but replying to Gumeniuk*): "The one you brought with you." … Dobrovolskii asked: "Are you pointing to me?" To which he responded impertinently that that was correct. Not feeling the least bit guilty, Dobrovolskii reproached the boy and his mother for making such a fraudulent claim. The boy climbed from the bed to the top of the oven. Not denying the charge, he invited Dobrovolskii to come closer and proceeded to whisper in his ear, asking Dobrovolskii what he would give him to keep him quiet. Dobrovolskii decisively asked why he would give him anything if he wasn't guilty, whereupon the diviner said that Dobrovolskii's father would give him something. Dobrovolskii didn't know if the boy ever answered him but did remember the boy ordering him to tell his father to come see him. Although his father did ride to the village Glinok on another day, he didn't find the boy diviner.

Since that time everyone has suspected Dobrovolskii of committing the arson. To remove suspicion from him, he asked for a written legal decision, adding that the peasant Oleksei Stupak was mainly responsible for this slander because he was always threatening their home out of some malice toward his father. As far as he knew, Stupak was the first to suspect him and his remarks led the boy make his divination.

(Under oath Oleksei Stupak denied being the source of the rumor that Dobrovolskii had committed arson and testified that he did not suspect him of the crime.)

Already in May, the Rovno land court had placed the defendant Pidgaichuk under house arrest, thus putting an end to his false divinations.

The verdict: In examining this case, the court of equity finds that the defendant Pidgaichuk made self-interested false divinations, destroyed order, tempted ignorant people, and disturbed their peace of mind. For these offenses Pidgaichuk should be punished by lower-level police servitors at his residence with ten blows of the birch rod and the local parish priest should impress upon him that he should not dare to carry out similar actions in the future under fear of a stricter application of the law.

The verdict and report of the case are to be reviewed by the governor of the province.

Chair Karpilovich/Karpylovych
Noble representative A. Slabitskii
Noble representative Tit Siarnitskii
Secretary Belitskii

NOTES

Note on Translation and Transliteration

1 Rodney D. Bohac, "The 1827 Peasant Uprising at Bernovo," in *The Human Tradition in Imperial Russia*, ed. Christine D. Worobec (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2009), 66n2.

Introduction

1 Classic anthropological studies include E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles, and Magic among the Azande*, ed. Eva Gillies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); Bronislaw Malinowski, *Magic, Science, and Religion* (1954; repr. Mansfield Centre, Conn.: Martino Publishing, 2015). And for history, see Jules Michelet, *La Sorcière: The Witch of the Middle Ages*, trans. Lionel J. Trotter (London: Simpkin, Marshall and Co, 1863); H. R. Trevor-Roper, "The European Witch-craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries," in his *The European Witch-Craze of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, and Other Essays* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), 90–192; and Norman Cohn, *Europe's Inner Demons: The Demonization of Christians in Medieval Christendom*, rev. ed. (London: Pimlico, 1993).

2 Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen, eds., *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

3 For example, anthropological studies of witchcraft and modernity include Adam Ashforth, *Witchcraft, Violence, and Democracy in South Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005); Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, eds., *Modernity and Its Malcontents: Ritual and Power in Postcolonial Africa* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993); Mary Douglas and E. E. Evans-Pritchard, eds., *Witchcraft Confessions and Accusations* (London: Tavistock, 1970); Jeanne Favret-Saada, *Deadly Words: Witchcraft in the Bocage*, trans. Catherine Cullen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Peter Geschiere, *The Modernity of Witchcraft: Politics and the Occult in Postcolonial Africa*, trans. Peter Geschiere and Janet Rotman (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2000); Brigit Meyer and Peter Pels, eds., *Magic and*

Modernity: Interfaces of Revelation and Concealment (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press); James T. Siegel, *Naming the Witch: Cultural Memory in the Present* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2006); and Michael T. Taussig, *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism in South America; and Examples of Historical Studies of the Non-West* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980). The literature is vast, and we make no pretense here at complete coverage. We want to stress, however, that beyond history and anthropology, many other disciplines are contributing exciting studies to the field. These include, but are not limited to, art history, literature, performance studies, archeology, psychology, and philosophy.

4 For a discussion of non-Russian and non-Ukrainian areas, see Brian P. Levack, "The Decline and End of Witchcraft Persecutions," in *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Stuart Clark (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 48–79.

5 Valerie Kivelson and Jonathan Shaheen, "Prosaic Witchcraft and Semiotic Totalitarianism: Muscovite Magic Reconsidered," *Slavic Review* 70, no. 1 (2011): 44.

6 Valerie Kivelson, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 2; Elena B. Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics: Popular Religiosity and 'Spiritual Crimes' in Eighteenth-Century Russia," trans. Liv Bliss, *Russian Studies in History* 45, no. 4 (2007): 64; and Kateryna Dysa, *Istoriia z vid'mamy: Sudy pro chary v ukrains'kykh voevodstvakh Rechi Pospolytoi XVII–XVIII stolittia* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2008), 64.

7 This unusual profile was first noted and analyzed by Russell Zguta, "Witchcraft Trials in Seventeenth-Century Russia," *American Historical Review* 82, no. 2 (1977): 187–207.

8 On exceptions to the usual gender profile, see Maia Madar, "Estonia I: Werewolves and Poisoners," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft: Centres and Peripheries*, ed. Bengt Ankarloo and Gustav Henningsen (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 257–72; Juhan Kahak, "Estonia II: The Crusade against Idolatry," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 273–84; Antero Heikkinen and Timo Kervinen, "Finland: The Male Domination," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 319–38; Kirsten Hastrup, "Iceland: Sorcerers and Paganism," in *Early Modern European Witchcraft*, 383–401; and Marko Nenonen, " 'Envious Are All the People, Witches Watch at Every Gate': Finnish Witches and Witch Trials in the 17th Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History* 18 (1993): 77–91. In the heart of Europe, France also offers some exceptionally high representation of males in particular jurisdictions: Alfred Soman, "Les Procès de sorcellerie au Parlement de Paris (1565–1640)," *Annales, économies, sociétés, civilisations* 32, no. 4 (1977): 790–814; and "La Sorcellerie vue du Parlement de Paris au début du XVIIe siècle," in *La Gironde de 1610 à nos jours: Questions diverse. Actes du 104e Congrès national des Sociétés Savantes, Bordeaux, 1979,* Section d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, vol. 2 (Paris, 1981): 393–405; and *Sorcellerie et justice criminelle: Le Parlement de Paris, 16e–18e siècles* (Hampshire, UK: Variorum, 1992), 798–99. William Monter finds an extraordinary pocket of male witches in Normandy in his "Toads and Eucharists: The Male Witches of Normandy, 1564–1660," *French Historical Studies* 20, no. 4 (1997): 563–95.

9 Here and elsewhere, in our treatment of Ukrainian cases we draw on the work of Kateryna Dysa, *Istoriia z vid'mamy*. See p. 63 for the percentage of women charged with witchcraft.

10 Linda C. Hults, *The Witch as Muse: Art, Gender, and Power in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011).

11 Walter Stephens, *Demon Lovers: Witchcraft, Sex, and the Crisis of Belief* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

12 Gerhild Scholz Williams, *Defining Dominion: The Discourses of Magic and Witchcraft in Early Modern France and Germany* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995).

13 Kivelson and Shaheen, "Prosaic Witchcraft," 34, 37; and Valerie Kivelson, "Lethal Convictions: The Power of a Satanic Paradigm in Russian and European Witch Trials," *Magic, Ritual, and Witchcraft* 6, no. 1 (2011): 47.

14 Serhii Plokhy, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations: Premodern Identities in Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

15 For more information on witchcraft and possession in the late Russian imperial period, see Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001).

Chapter 1. Early Accounts of Witchcraft, Sorcery, and Magic in Medieval Rus

1 Deeming Menocchio's beliefs to be heretical, the Inquisition ordered him to be burned at the stake in 1599. See Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. John and Anne Tedeschi (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980).

2 The description here suggests that the Chud magician is practicing a shamanic ritual, which usually involves traveling in a trance state to other realms, often the realm of the dead, and bringing back communications from there. Shamanic trances, here described as demonic possession, reflect quite a different set of premises from the kinds of demonic possession we encounter later within the framework of Orthodoxy.

3 Gleb Sviatoslavich, son of Grand Prince Sviatoslav Iaroslavich of Kyiv, ruled as prince in Novgorod from 1067 or 1068 until he was driven out by the people of Novgorod and then killed by the Chuds in 1078.

4 Prince Iaroslav Vsevolodovich (1191–1246) was the fourth son of Vsevolod, Grand Prince of Kyiv, known as "Big Nest." Iaroslav served intermittently as prince of Novgorod between 1222 and 1236. He won victories against the Lithuanians and the Teutonic Knights but made himself unpopular with the Novgorodians. Following a stint in Kyiv, he moved north in the wake of the Mongol invasions (1237–40). He then became grand prince of Vladimir and served the Mongol overlords.

5 2 Thess. 3:8.

6 Luke 16:13. Cf. Matt. 6:24.

7 A paraphrase of Matt. 7:7; Luke 11:9.

8 In the Bible, the leper Naaman initially ignored Elisha's order to wash himself seven times in the River Jordan (2 Kings 5:1–19).

Chapter 2. Witchcraft and Politics in Muscovy and the Hetmanate

1 Russell E. Martin, *A Bride for the Tsar: Bride-Shows and Marriage Politics in Early Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2012).

2 W. F. Ryan, "The Witchcraft Hysteria in Early Modern Europe: Was Russia an Exception?" *Slavonic and East European Review* 76, no. 1 (1998): 49–84; quotation on 77.

3 This refers to the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican/Tax Collector (Luke 18:9–14). The Sunday of the Publican and the Pharisee commemorates the parable and begins the three-week pre-Lenten Season for the Orthodox.

4 For prohibitions against this form of magic, see the relevant passage in the penitential listings in the documents in 3.1.

5 This is the conventional notation showing that the witness signed the original document himself. In other cases, when the witness was illiterate, a report notes that someone else signed "in place of the witness, by his will."

6 Maksim the Greek's original name was Michael Trivolis. He came from a noble family in Epirus and studied in Italy, where he became a translator of Greek religious texts. Influenced by the teachings of Renaissance humanism, he left his Orthodox faith and turned to Catholicism. He took orders as a Catholic Dominican monk. Thereafter, however, he returned to the Orthodox faith and in 1505–6 was tonsured as the monk Maximos at the Vatopedi Monastery, one of the monastic institutions on Mount Athos.

7 W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 412.

8 Vasilii III's mother was the Byzantine princess Sofia Paleologue, niece of the last emperor of Byzantium. Vasilii's maternal grandfather was Thomas Paleologue, ruler of Morea, brother of the emperor. Constantinople fell to the Turks in 1453.

9 In 1513, the Crimean khan Mehmed Girey had been able to replace the ruling khan of Kazan with his own brother. To ensure that victory, the khan launched an attack together with Nogai Tatars and Tatars from the Kazan Khanate on Moscow in 1521, which resulted in the torching of rural areas and the suburbs in Kolomna. The reference to Vasilii's supposedly cowardly behavior stems from this 1521 attack. In the end the Tatars were repulsed.

10 The term *vodka* originally referred to a medicinal liqueur made from herbs or berries. Its meaning gradually changed to the modern usage in written sources between 1500 and 1700, so the exact meaning in a particular source cannot be determined. We are grateful to Carolyn Pouncy for this information.

11 On magpies in Russian magic, see Ryan, *Bathhouse at Midnight*, esp. 81, 91, 414.

12 In Russian Orthodox churches since the late fifteenth century, a wall of icons, organized in rows, separates the nave from the altar. The wall is called an iconostasis. The Deesis row is the centerpiece of the iconostasis, with icons of the Mother of God and Saint John the Baptist imploring Christ on behalf of humanity.

13 Andrei Rublev (c. 1360–1430) was perhaps the greatest Russian icon painter of all time. His work still survives in the Church of the Annunciation in the Moscow Kremlin and in major museums.

14 Petr (in office 1308–26) and Iona (1448–61) were two of three metropolitans of Kiev and All Russia in Muscovite times who were canonized. The third was Aleksei (1354–78).

15 The tsar had a residence in the settlement of Vorobyevo, not far from Moscow. Currently, the area is well within the limits of Moscow's metropolitan sprawl and is the location of Moscow State University. The fact that the residents of Moscow pursued the tsar to his country estate demonstrates the seriousness of the witchcraft charges. The anger of the mob evidently frightened the ruler.

16 Rzhev is a town located about 130 miles west, and slightly north, of Moscow.

17 Yeshayahu Gruber, "Ivan Peresvetov," in *Christian-Muslim Relations: A Bibliographical History*, vol. 7: *Central and Eastern Europe, Asia, Africa and South America (1500–1600)*, ed. David Thomas and John Chesworth, with John Azumah, Stanisław Grodź, Andrew Newman, Douglas Pratt (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 278–307; quotation on 278. The following discussion draws heavily on Gruber's article, as well as on V. F. Rzhiga, *I. S. Peresvetov: Publitsist XVI veka*, vol. 1, pt. 2, *ChOIDR* (Moscow: Sinodal'naia Tipografiia, 1908), 57–58; A. A. Zimin and D. S. Likhachev, eds., *Sochineniia I. Peresvetova* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1956); and Zimin, *I. S. Peresvetov i ego sovremenniki* (Moscow: AN SSSR, 1958), 243–51.

18 Gruber, "Ivan Peresvetov," 299.

19 Gruber, "Ivan Peresvetov," 299.

20 We have found no clear definition of the Russian word used here—*khistiasia*—but our translation of "feasting on" seems to capture the sense.

21 Lloyd E. Berry and Robert O. Crummey, "Introduction," in *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom: Russia in the Accounts of Sixteenth-Century English Voyagers*, ed. Berry and Crummey (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 249.

22 Berry and Crummey note that there is no evidence to confirm Horsey's idea that Ivan hoped to marry Queen Elizabeth herself. Ivan did hope to marry Lady Hastings, in order to secure an alliance with England as well as a safe haven in case he needed to flee his country. He was married to his seventh wife, Maria Nagaia, at the time, and at least one of his previous wives was still living, but he volunteered to send Nagaia off to a convent if the English marriage came through. See Berry and Crummey, *Rude and Barbarous Kingdom*, 280n4.

23 Berry and Crummey note, "Horsey lumped together two similar incidents that occurred at different times. The Novgorod bishop may be either Pimen or his successor Leonid. Pimen was accused of conspiring to surrender Novgorod to the Poles and was imprisoned in 1570 during Ivan's sack of the city. He died in the Venevskii Monastery in 1571. Leonid was deposed and executed in 1575. Bomelius was then at the height of his power; he fell under suspicion of treason and was tortured to death in 1579" (*Rude and Barbarous Kingdom*, 293n7). Horsey correctly suggests a linkage of the two high criminal offenses, treason and witchcraft, which recurs in a number of political witchcraft cases.

24 Berry and Crummey demonstrate that Horsey's statement was incorrect. Ivan did not offer to change the succession (*Rude and Barbarous Kingdom*, 304n2).

25 Ivan IV's son Fedor Ivanovich (1557–1598), here identified as "the prince," married Irina Godunova in 1580. Because the couple produced no heirs, with Fedor's death the Riurikid dynasty came to an end. Irina's brother, Boris Godunov, would succeed Fedor as tsar.

26 Note the persistence of the identification of "the North" as a source of witches and witchcraft. In later documents, the South—the Ukrainian borderlands—will often take this role in the Russian imagination.

27 A Roman emperor, Heliogabalus or M. Aurelius Antoninus (r. 218–22 CE) was a model of tyrannical rule and self-indulgence. He was killed by his own troops.

28 *Ropata* means non-Christian site of worship (here, mosque or temple) in Russian.

29 Johan Eilof was a Dutch physician who served as Ivan's court doctor toward the end of his reign.

30 "Jewish" probably suggests treacherous in this context. Ivan was actively hostile to Jews, although there were virtually none living in his realm. He sent a tirade to the Polish king insisting that no Jew be allowed into his territory.

31 This is a wonderfully practical refutation of the rumor spread by the boyars to the effect that the Glinskiis had set Moscow on fire by sprinkling bewitched water through the city streets. Ivan asks how anyone could reach a building as tall as the Church of St. John with water sprinkled up from street level.

32 Ivan's meaning is not entirely clear, but Kurbskii's first letter accuses Ivan's henchmen of "acting more [viciously] than the priests of Cronus," and Ivan himself of massacres and sexual excesses, which Ivan excuses as responses to Anastasia's death. See J. L. I. Fennell, ed. and trans., *The Correspondence between Prince A. M. Kurbskii and Tsar Ivan IV of Russia, 1564–1579* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1955), 8–9.

33 Fennell understands the soldier's wife to have been someone with whom Kurbskii had a love affair. Kurbskii responds by dismissing " 'the affairs of Cronus and Aphrodite and soldiers' wives' as 'tipsy women's tales' " (Fennell, *Correspondence*, 214–15).

34 "Boris Ivanovich Morozov begat two Tuchkovs: Vasily [and] Ioann. Ioann begat Irina the mother of Roman. Roman engendered the Tsaritsa Anastasia. Vasily begat Mikhail the father of my mother" (Fennell, *Correspondence*, 211n4).

35 Iurii Ivanovich died in 1536.

36 Ex. 20:5.

37 Ex. 20:4.

38 Matt. 10:33.

39 *Otnosy* are small bundles containing coal, ash, and burned clay, used for healing sicknesses (Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivago velikoruskago iazyka* [St. Petersburg: M. O. Vol'f, 1881], 2:741).

40 Quoted in Ann M. Kleimola, "The Duty to Denounce in Muscovite Russia," *Slavic Review* 31, no. 4 (1972): 765.

41 This was one of Ivan's many inexplicable acts: naming another man to hold a part of his own title. On this episode, see Don Ostrowski, "Simeon Bekbulatovich's Remarkable Career as Tatar Khan, Grand Prince of Rus, and Monastic Elder," *Russian History* 39, no. 3 (2013): 297.

42 Chester S. L. Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 236, 247.

43 The higher servitors had specialized oaths as well that were tailored to their titles and functions.

44 Denis Liapin, "Political Struggle in Russia in the Summer of 1645 and Oath of Allegiance Registries," *Quaestio Rossica*, no. 1 (2013): 73, 75–76.

45 I. E. Zabelin, *Domashnii byt russkikh tsarits v XVI i XVII st.* (1901; repr. Moscow: Iazyki russkoi kul'tury, 2001), 202; cited in Maureen Perrie, "The Tsaritsa, the Needlewomen, and the Witches: Magic in Moscow in the 1630s," *Russian History* 40, no. 3–4 (2013): 302.

46 Perrie, "Tsaritsa, the Needlewomen, and the Witches," 302.

47 Ryan, *Bathhouse at Midnight*, 186.

48 Ryan, *Bathhouse at Midnight*, 417.

49 In 1570/71, Godunov married Maria Grigorievna Skuratova-Belskaia, daughter of Ivan IV's head of the oprichnina, Maliuta Skuratov-Belskii.

50 As of 1589, the patriarch was the head of the Russian Orthodox Church. Metropolitans were the next highest ecclesiastics, followed by the rest of the ranks listed here.

51 The tsaritsa was from the Streshnev family. "In 1643, a man was sentenced to death by burning for hexing" her. See *Moskovskaia delovaia i bytovaia pis'mennost' XVII veka* (Moscow: Nauka,

1968), pt. 5, no. 18, 275–75, cited in Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 341.

52 To ward off evil, protective talismans were also placed in the harnesses and decorations for the royal horses. See Ryan, *Bathhouse at Midnight*, 221–22.

53 Maria Khlopova, the first choice of Tsar Aleksei's father, suffered nearly an identical fate in 1616. Discussed in Martin, *Bride for the Tsar*, 167, 190–95.

54 Aleksandr Lavrov, "Koldovstvo—gosudarstvennaia pol'za," unpublished ms., 2010; A. Vostokov, "Volshebnyi kamen' (iz byta nachala XVIII v.)," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 29 (1887): 379–83; and A. A. Turilov, "Kamen' dlia vyzyvaniia dozhdia i vetra: Rukovodstvo po meteorologicheskoi magii v starobelorusskoi zapisi XVI v.," *Zhivaia starina*, no. 3 (2000): 16–18.

55 Lavrov, "Koldovstov." Father Simon, together with other clerics and peasants, participated in the harvesting of the magical herb and finding buried treasures, but in the investigation, knowing that any found treasure by law belonged to the tsar, underscored his zeal for the tsar's welfare: he wanted to find buried treasure and "bring it to the great sovereign." See RGADA, f. 248 (Senate), binding 1/266, d. 8 (or according to D. O. Serov, op. 121, d. 28); and A. A. Golombiovskii, "Razryv-trava," *Istoricheskii vestnik* 42 (1890): 843–45. On the informer Vasilii Semakov, see RGADA, f. 7, op. 1, d. 1144.

Chapter 3. Laws and Guidelines concerning the Prosecution of Witchcraft, Late Twelfth Century to 1885

1 John H. Langbein, *Prosecuting Crime in the Renaissance: England, Germany, France* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1974), 267.

2 On the flexible application of the *Carolina* in witch trials, see Michael Ströhmer, *Von Hexen, Ratsherren und Juristen: Die Rezeption der Peinlichen Halsgerichtsordnung Kaiser Karls V. in den frühen Hexenprozessen der Hansestadt Lemgo 1583–1621* (Paderborn: Bonifatius Buchverlag, 2003).

3 Langbein, *Prosecuting Crime*, 259–308.

4 Gitana Zujienė, "Witchcraft Court Cases in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries," *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 20 (2015): 6–7. http://www.academia.edu/33170529/WITCHCRAFT_COURT_CASES_IN_THE_GRAND_DUCHY_OF_LITHUANIA_IN_THE_SIXTEENTH_TO_EIGHTEENTH_CENTURIES_GITANA_ZUJIEN%C4%96.

5 Kateryna Dysa, *Istoriia z vid'mamy: Sudy pro chary v ukrains'kykh voevodstvakh Rechi Pospolytoi XVII–XVIII stolittia* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2008), 36.

6 Dysa's commentaries on Groicki's writings inform this and subsequent paragraphs. See her *Istoriia z vid'mamy*, 32–34, 41–43.

7 The observation regarding Roman law comes from H. D. Erik Midelfort, "Heartland of the Witchcraze," in *The Witchcraft Reader*, ed. Darren Oldridge (London: Routledge, 2001), 116.

8 On Muscovite law, see Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012). Kollmann overturns earlier stereotypes of Muscovy as a lawless and arbitrary despotism. She demonstrates that Muscovites expressed a strong legal consciousness and that legal and procedural norms were enormously influential.

9 *PSPR*, vol. 5, no. 2173 (September 4, 1728).

10 Elena B. Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics: Popular Religiosity and 'Spiritual Crimes' in Eighteenth-Century Russia," trans. Liv Bliss, *Russian Studies in History* 45, no. 4 (2007): 65.

11 On different variants of interpretation of this decree, see, for example, T. V. Mikhailova, "Russkoe zakonodatel'stvo v otnoshenii koldovstva: Pravovaia baza russkikh koldovskikh protsessov vtoroi poloviny XVIII veka i ee spetsifika," in Antropologiia, fol'kloristika, lingvistika (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii universitet v Sankt-Peterburge, Fakul'tet etnologii, 2002), 172–74. See also her monograph, *Ot kolduna do sharlatana: Koldovskie protsessy v Rossiiskoi imperii XVIII veka (1740–1800)* (St. Petersburg: Izd. Evropeiskogo universiteta v Sankt-Peterburge, 2018), 23–24.

12 Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics," 64; and A. S. Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii, 1700–1740 gg.* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2000), 354, 364–65.

13 E. B. Smilianskaia, *Volshebniki, bogokhul'niki, eretiki: Narodnaia religioznost' i "dukhovnye prestupleniia" v Rossii XVIII* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003), 198.

14 Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia*, 362–65. We thank Professor Lavrov for sharing his most recent perceptions with us.

15 *PSZ*, vol. 16, no. 11698. The precedents include Peter I's 1715 and Anna's 1737 decrees (see Document 3.12 and introduction to Document 3.16).

16 *PSZ*, vol. 18, no. 12949, art. 497.

17 *PSZ*, vol. 20, no. 14392, chapter 26, especially articles 397 and 399.

18 *PSZ*, vol. 21, no. 15379, art. 266.

19 Valentyna Shandra provides a list of forty-one courts of equity across imperial Russia, for which she could track down the dates of operation and in some instances the number of cases for discrete periods. See her *Sovisni sudy v Ukraini (ostannia chvert' XVIII–seredyna XIX st.)* (Kyiv: Instytut istorii Ukrainy NAN Ukrainy, 2011), 239–40.

20 *Svod zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (St. Petersburg: V tip. Vtorago otdeleniia sobstvennoi Ego Imperatorskago Velichestva Kantseliariia, 1857), 15, book 2, art. 720.

21 Eve Levin, "Healers and Witches in Early Modern Russia," in *Saluting Aron Gurevich: Essays in History, Literature, and Other Related Subjects*, ed. Yelena Mazour-Matusevich and Alexandra S. Korros (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 117–18.

22 This story made headlines in the *New York Times* (Michael Specter, "In Modern Russia, a Medieval Witch Hunt: Terekhovo Journal in Modern Russia, a Fatal Medieval Witch Hunt Demons from the Dark Ages still bedevil Russia," *New York Times*, April 5, 1997, 1).

23 L. Solov'eva, " 'Ia ego okoldovala …,' " *Novosti Pskova*, November 21, 2001; Oksana Smirnova, Evgeniia Velengurina, and Dina Litvinova, "Samye znamenitye znakhari Podmoskov'ia," *Komsomol'skaia pravda*, January 28, 2002; Aleksei Koriakov, "Sud da delo: Bezumie," *Novgorodskie vedomosti*, June 25, 2002; "Srochno v nomer! Tsyganka zarezala znakomuiu, ispugavshis' sglaza," *Moskovskii komsomolets*, January 14, 2003; "Fotograf nachal ubivat' posle visita k znakharke," *Vechernaia Moskva*, no. 23 (February 13, 2003), 3; Oleg Zolotov, "Inkvizitor iz Mozhaiska," *Trud*, February 27, 2003, 9; Nadezhda Andreeva, "Khronika proisshestvii: Nazval ved'moi … i podzheg," *Moskovskaia pravda*, October 28, 2003; and Sergei Nikolaev, "Okhota na ved'm," *Rabochii put'*, May 14, 2004.

24 For a contemporary witch killing and cases of child abuse involving beliefs in witchcraft and demonic possession in England, see "Witchcraft Murder: Couple Jailed for Kristy Bamu Killing," *BBC News,* March 5, 2012, http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-london-17255470; and "Belief in Witchcraft and Demonic Possession Linked to 1,500 Child Abuse Cases," *The Telegraph*, November 24, 2017, https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/11/24/belief-witchcraft-demonic-possession-linked-1500-child-abuse/. For descriptions of two witch killings in Germany and France in the mid-1970s, see Brian P. Levack, *The Witch Hunt in Early Modern Europe*, 3rd ed. (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2006), 291. The United Nations released a report on witchcraft cases around the world in 2016, revealing a global persistence in witchcraft beliefs and practices that are accompanied by violence. See "Witchcraft Accusations and Persecution: Muti Murders and Human Sacrifice. Harmful Beliefs and Practices behind a Global Crisis in Human Rights," http://www.whrin.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/2017-UNREPORT-final.pdf.

25 Daniel H. Kaiser, *The Growth of the Law in Medieval Russia* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 19–23.

26 See E. V. Beliakova, L. V. Moshkova, and T. A. Oparina, *Kormchaia kniga: Ot rukopisnoi traditsii k pechatnomu izdaniiu* (Moscow: Institut rossiiskoi istorii RAN, 2017), for a different account of transmission.

27 See the discussion of this case and its sources in Iu. A. Kozlov, "Fragment koldovskogo dela XVII v. s tsitatami iz Kormchei knigi 1653 g.," *Problemy istorii Rossii, no. 3: Novgorodskaia Rus': Istoricheskoe prostranstvo i kul'turnoe nasledie* (Ekaterinburg: Volot, 2000), http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Russ/XVII/1660-1680/Kold_delo_1669/text.htm.

28 With thanks to Nikolaos Chrissidis for his help with this translation.

29 The case endings are confusing here, but this interpretation seems to make the most sense.

30 The church statute attributed to Volodymyr, also extant only in far later manuscripts, similarly clusters witchcraft with sexual and marital infractions: "And these are [the cases subject to the jurisdiction of] church courts: divorce; fornication; adultery; rape; abduction [of women]; [disputes] between a husband and wife over an inheritance; [cases which arise] if [a man and woman] marry within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity or spiritual relationship [which stem from acting as godparents for someone]; witchcraft; [making of] potions; [making of] charms; sorcery; magic." See Daniel H. Kaiser, ed. and trans., *The Laws of Rus'—Tenth to Fifteenth Centuries* (Salt Lake City: Charles Schlacks Publisher, 1992), 42–43.

31 Kaiser, "Introduction," in *Laws of Rus'*, xlvi–xlvii.

32 For more on penitentials in Kyivan Rus and early modern Muscovy, see Eve Levin, *Sex and Society in the World of the Orthodox Slavs, 900–1700* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

33 A. I. Almazov, *Tainaia ispoved' v Pravoslavnoi vostochnoi tserkvi: Opyt vneshnei istorii* (Odessa: Tipo-lit. Shtaba Odesskago voennago okruga, 1894), 3:204–5. With thanks to Fedor Maksimishin for sharing his findings on these *ponovleniia*.

34 Alexander V. Muller, ed. and trans., *The Spiritual Regulation of Peter the Great* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1972), 63–66.

35 For more information about the practice of confession in imperial Russia, see Nadieszda Kizenko, "The Mystery of Confession in Imperial Russia," *Modern Greek Studies Yearbook* 20/21 (2004/5): 1–15.

36 The penance comes from A. Kh. Vostokov, *Opisanie russkikh i slovenskikh rukopisei Rumiantsevskogo muzeuma* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imp. Akad. nauk, 1842), 552.

37 That is, astrological and numerological literature translated from Western European sources. The Church's opposition to almanacs and similar literature stems from their astrological associations. *Rafli*: a Byzantine astrological work, incorporating Western and Arabic elements, translated in Pskov during the sixteenth century. On *Rafli*, see W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999), 340–47.

38 Ryan identifies "crow-cawing" as an ill-omen interpreted by magicians in his *Bathhouse at Midnight*, 125.

39 A fourteenth-century Spanish-Jewish work on predicting eclipses.

40 Not observing church rules is here equated with occult practice.

41 Presumably, people who cast spells to forestall or to bring rain.

42 In *Domostroi*, the sentences in this biblical passage are out of order, thus, "Can light consort with darkness? Can there be a compact between the temple of God and the idols of the heathen? Can a believer join hands with an unbeliever? Can Christ agree with Belial?" [2 Corinthians 6:14–16]

43 The Synod of Ancyra met in 315 A.D. Its eighteen bishops considered under what conditions converts who had lapsed into paganism could be readmitted to the church.

44 Presumably, … the compiler of this addition (*"Such people shall be commanded not to partake of communion for six years."*) is repeating the ruling given above (*and extending it by a year*).

45 This is usually numbered 72, not 82, among the canons of Basil the Great, also called Basil of Caesaria. The canons were extracted by clerics from various letters, not written as a single document. Ruling number 65 (presumably the no. 93 mentioned at the end of the paragraph) is a longer version of the same. See *Kniga pravil sviatykh apostolov, sviatykh soborov vselenskikh, i pomestnykh, i sviatykh otets* (Montreal: Izd. Bratstva prep. Iova Pochaevskogo, 1971), pt. 2, 214, 216.

46 This is inaccurate. The twenty-ninth rule of the Laodican Council directly states that one should not observe the Sabbath on Saturdays and work is allowed as on other days of the week.

47 Anton Seljak, "The Russian Monetary System from the Kievan Empire to 1897," trans. Graham Pascoe, https://moneymuseum.com/pdf/yesterday/05_Modern_Times/51_The%20Russian%20Monetary%20System%20from%20the%20Kievan%20Empire%20to%201897.pdf.

48 As is evident also in the proceedings of the Stoglav Council (see Document 3.4), minstrels (*skomorokhi*) were considered suspect by the Orthodox Church for their "devilish" singing and dancing, their use of instruments (entirely prohibited in Orthodox rites), and their use of masks in their performances. Despite their forbidden status, they were popular all over Muscovy and even performed at the tsar's court. The distinction between "registered" and "unregistered" had to do with whether or not they were officially listed by their profession in the state census rolls.

49 *Akty istoricheskie, sobrannye i izdannye Arkheograficheskoiu kommissieiu*, vol. 3 (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Ekspeditsii zagotovleniia Gosudarstvennykh bumag, 1841), no. 92, pt. 10, 96.

50 Kollmann, *Crime and Punishment*, 284–85.

51 Valerie Kivelson, *Desperate Magic: The Moral Economy of Witchcraft in Seventeenth-Century Russia* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013), 46–47.

52 Thomas Consett, *The Present State and Regulations of the Church of Russia* (London: Printed by S. Holt and sold by J. Brotherton, 1729), 1:38.

53 *PSZ*, vol. 5, no. 2985. Quoted and translated in James Cracraft, *The Church Reform of Peter the Great* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 290; and Muller, *Spiritual Regulation*, 107n25.

54 *PSPR*, vol. 5, no. 1556 (May 28, 1725). The Senate cited an earlier general recommendation by Peter of the provisioning of retired soldiers who had no hope of earning a livelihood (*PSZ*, vol. 7, no. 4718, art. 6).

55 *PSZ*, vol. 6, no. 3963, translated in Cracraft, *Church Reform*, 292.

56 Both men experienced wild swings in their political fortunes during their tumultuous careers. Dolgorukii had been deprived of his title and rank and exiled in 1718 on suspicions of conspiring with a group of boyars to replace Peter I with his son Aleksei and subsequently pardoned in 1724. We thank Aleksandr Lavrov for his transcription of the archival document, interpretive notes and additional comments, which he generously shared with the editors. We draw on his comments here.

57 *Opisanie dokumentov i del khraniashchikhsia v arkhive Sviateishago Pravitel'stvuiushchago Sinoda*, vol. 5: *(1725 g.)* (St. Petersburg: V Sinodal'noi tipografii, 1807), 570.

58 Gregory Freeze, "Handmaiden of the State? The Church in Imperial Russia Reconsidered," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36, no. 1 (1985): 82–102.

59 N. S. Suvorov, *O tserkovnykh nakazaniiakh: Opyt issledovaniia po tserkovnomu pravu* (St. Petersburg, 1876), 184–85.

60 *PSPR*, vol. 5, no. 2173 (September 4, 1728).

61 Nikolaos A. Chrissidis, "Crying Their Hearts Out: A Case of Public Penance in the Era of Catherine the Great," in *Religion and Identity in Russia and the Soviet Union: A Festschrift for Paul Bushkovitch*, ed. Chrissidis, Cathy Potter, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, and Jennifer Spock (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2011), 107–25; and Elena Marasinova, "Punishment by Penance in 18th-Century Russia: Church Practices in the Service of the Secular State," trans. Simon Belokowsky, *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 17, no. 2 (2016): 305–32.

62 The Spiritual Regulation was published in its final form on September 16, 1721. A supplement appeared the following year.

63 Aleksandr Evgenievich Burtsev, *Nechistaia i nevedomaia v skazkakh, razskazakh i legendakh russkago naroda* (Petrograd: Tipografiia S. Samoilova, 1915), 1:54.

64 I. S. Belaev, "Ikotniki i klikushki," *Russkaia starina* (April 1905): 163; and *PSZ*, vol. 10, no. 7450.

65 Quoted in M. Lakhtin, *Besooderzhimost' v sovremennoi derevne: Istoriko-psikhologicheskoe izsledovanie* (Moscow: Tipo-litografiia Tovarishchestva I. N. Kushnerev, 1910), 12.

66 Boris N. Mironov (with Ben Eklof), *The Social History of Imperial Russia, 1700–1917* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2000), 2:255, 253.

67 Frances Nethercott, *Russian Legal Culture before and after Communism: Criminal Justice, Politics, and the Public Sphere* (London: Routledge, 2007), 26.

Chapter 4. Witchcraft Trials' Processes

1 Wanda Wyporska, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland, 1500–1800* (Houndmills, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 80–81.

2 Michael Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host: Imagining Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 73.

3 We thank Kateryna Dysa for sharing this information with us.

4 Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 99.

5 M. F. Vladimirskii-Budanov, *Akty po upravleniiu Malorossieiu grafa P. A. Rumiantseva za 1767 g.* [Kyiv]: Tip. Imperatorskoi Universiteta sv. Vladimira, V. Zavadskogo, [1891], 27–28.

6 Except where indicated, the descriptions of Golshanskaia's properties as well as the details of the divorce proceedings between the Kurbskiis are based on Nikolai Ivanishev, *Zhizn' Andreia Mikhailovicha Kurbskago v Litve i na Volyni: Akty, izdannye vremennoiu kommissieiu, Vysochaishe uchrezhdennoiu pri Kievskom voennom, podol'skom i volynskom general-gubernator* (Kyiv: V lito-tip. zavedenii i K. Val'nera, 1849), 1:x–xxv; and Daniil Lukich Mordovtsev, *Russkie istoricheskie zhenshchiny* (e-book repr., Osteon-Grupp, 2015), https://www.litres.ru/daniil-mordovcev/russkie-istoricheskie-zhenschiny/, 194–97.

7 The negative assessment of Kurbskii comes from Brian J. Boeck, "Eyewitness or False Witness? Two Lives of Metropolitan Filipp of Moscow," *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 55, no. 2 (2007): 959; and Norman Davies, *God's Playground: A History of Poland in Two Volumes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 1:362.

8 Konstantin Iur'evich Erusalimskii, "Razvod na Volyni: Kazys Marii Gol'shanskoi," in Sotsial'naia istoriia: Ezhegodnik 2003 (Moscow: ROSSPEN, 2003), 106.

9 Ivanishev, *Zhizn'*, xxvi.

10 Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host,* 69. For information about the dunking of alleged witches in Lithuanian and Latvian areas, see Alexander Lavrov, "A 1646 Case of 'Ordeal by Water' of Individuals Accused of Witchcraft in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania," *Russian History* 40, no. 3–4 (2013): 508–17; and Skaidrīte Cielava and Zenta Ērgle, *Old Riga Tales* (Riga: Liesma Publishing, 1977), 90–91.

11 V. Antonovych, *Koldovstvo: Dokumenty, protsessy, izsledovanie* (St. Petersburg: Tip. V. Kirshbauma, 1877), 27; P. I. Efimenko, "Sud nad ved'mami," *Kievskaia starina* 7 (1883): 383; and Russell Zguta, "The Ordeal by Water (Swimming of Witches) in the East Slavic World," *Slavic Review* 36, no. 2 (1977): 227–28.

12 Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 133–36.

13 Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host*, 90.

14 Wyporska, *Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland*, 80–81.

15 Nancy Shields Kollmann, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 157–66.

16 Marc Raeff, *The Well-Ordered Police State: Social and Institutional Change through the Law in the Germanies and Russia, 1600–1800* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983).

17 Kollmann, *Crime and Punishment in Early Modern Russia*, 179.

18 E. B. Smilianskaia, *Volshebniki, bogokhul'niki, eretiki: Narodnaia religioznost' i "dukhovnye prestupleniia" v Rossii XVIII veke* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003), 341–46.

19 John LeDonne, *Absolutism and the Ruling Class: The Formation of the Russian Political Order, 1700–1825* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 124.

20 John Le Donne, *Ruling Russia: Politics and Administration in the Age of Absolutism, 1762–1796* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 130; and his *Absolutism and the Ruling Class*, 154, 195.

21 Janet M. Hartley, "Catherine's Conscience Court—An English Equity Court?," in *Russia and the West in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. A. G. Cross (Newtonville, MA: Oriental Research Partners, 1983), 306. Hartley finds few witchcraft cases in her admittedly limited examination of conscience court archives, but that is not surprising since the overall numbers of witchcraft accusations that led to formal court hearings were few overall. (Hartley, "Catherine's Conscience Court," 311). The Vologda court of equity adjudicated around a dozen cases of witchcraft between 1833 and 1849.

22 Kozlov notes that Volosheninov is incorrectly identified here as Dmitrii; his name was Mikhail Iurevich Volosheninov. See Iu. Kozlov, ed., " 'I toiu de vorozhboiu ona, Daritsa, vorozhila mnogoe vremia …' (odin iz moskovskikh koldovskikh protsessov XVII v.)," in Problemy istorii Rossii, vol. 2: *Opyt gosudarstvennogo stroitel'stva XV-XX vv.* (Ekaterinburg: Volot, 1998), ll. 210–29. The published excerpt is available online at http://www.vostlit.info/Texts/Dokumenty/Russ/XVII/1640-1660/Lamanova_D/sysknoe_delo_1647.htm. See also S. B. Veselovskii, *D'iaki i pod'iachie XV–XVII vv.* (Moscow: Nauka, 1975), 106–7.

23 A few European doctors served the tsar and his family and, with the aid of a small number of Russians, staffed the Apothecary Chancellery (*Aptekarskii prikaz*), which was responsible for administering medical assistance to members of the court and the military. In practice, their services were rarely available (and probably even more rarely helpful), but Prince Kozlovskii evidently managed to engage their services. Most people relied on the other techniques mentioned here: prayer and magical-herbal healing, as well as fasting and pilgrimage.

24 Muscovites had interesting counting systems!

25 There is a prayer to the Mother of God that addresses her as "the warm intercessor for a cold/frigid world." Like many spells, Olenka's creatively repurposes official prayers to suit a purpose. Eve Levin calls this hybrid genre "supplicatory prayers." See her "Supplicatory Prayers as a Source for Popular Religious Culture in Muscovite Russia," in *Religion and Culture in Early Modern Russia and Ukraine*, ed. Samuel H. Baron and Nancy Shields Kollmann (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1997), 96–114.

26 For further analysis of this case, see Elena B. Smilianskaia, "Fortunetellers and Sorcerers in the Service of a Russian Aristocrat of the Eighteenth Century: The Case of Chamberlain Petr Saltykov," trans. Christine D. Worobec and John Wesley Hill, *Russian History* 40, no. 3–4 (2013): 364–80.

27 *The Memoirs of Catherine the Great*, trans. Mark Cruse and Hilde Hoogenboom (New York: Modern Library, 2006), 92.

28 Quoted in Edward Bever, "Witchcraft Prosecutions and the Decline of Magic," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 40, no. 2 (2009): 279.

29 Petr Alekseevich Alekseev, *Tserkovnyi slovar', ili istolkovanie rechenii slavenskikh drevnikh, takozh inoiazychnykh bez perevoda polozhennykh v sviashchennom pisanii i drugikh tserkovnykh knigakh* (Moscow: Tip. Imperatorskogo moskovskogo universiteta, 1773); quoted in Aleksandr Lavrov, "1758 g. — O kamergere Petre Saltykove," unpublished text, used with his generous permission.

30 Peter I introduced internal passports as well as revisions or censuses of the population to control mobility of the lower estates.

31 S. V. Golikova, "Klikushestvo glazami sviashchennika," in *Religiia i tserkov' v Sibiri: Sbornik nauchnykh statei i dokumental'nykh materialov* (Tiumen: RUTRA, 1995), 8:103.

32 S. S. Atapin and V. M. Lupanova, "Russkie klikushi: Tri vzgliada sovremennikov," in *Rossiiskii arkhiv: Istoriia otechestva v svidetel'stvakh i dokumentakh XVIII–XX vv.* (Moscow: Rossiiskii arkhiv, 2001), 11:194–95; quotation from 194.

33 For an analysis of this case, see Christine D. Worobec, "The 1850s Prosecution of Gerasim Fedotov for Witchcraft," *Russian History* 40, no. 3–4 (2013): 381–97.

34 See A. Veselovskii, "Opyty po istorii razvitiia khristianskoi legendy. II: Berta, Anastasiia i Piatnitsa. IV: Skazanie o 12 piatnitsakh," *Zhurnal Ministerstva narodnago prosveshcheniia* 185 (1876): 326–67; Basil Lourié, "Friday Veneration in Sixth- and Seventh-Century Christianity and Christian Legends about the Conversion of Nağrān," http://scrinium.academia.edu/BasilLourié/Papers/477968/Friday_Veneration_in_Sixth-_and_Seventh-_Century_Christianity_and_Christian_Legends_about_the_Conversion_of_Nağrān; B. M. Firsov and I. G. Kiseleva, eds., *Byt velikorusskikh krest'ian-zemlepashtsev: Opisanie materialov etnograficheskogo biuro kniazia V. N. Tenisheva (na primere Vladimirskoi gubernii)* (St. Petersburg: Evropeiskii dom, 1993), 150; N. P., "O vlianii zapadno-evropeiskoi literatury na drevnerusskuiu," *Trudy Kievskoi dukhovnoi akademii*, no. 2 (1871): 474–78; and W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 301–2.

35 Vladimir Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivago velikorusskago iazyka* (St. Petersburg: Izd. knigoprodavtsa- tipografa M. O. Vol'fa, 1882), 3:119–20; and Ryan, *Bathhouse at Midnight*, 277–78.

36 Stephen P. Frank, *Crime, Cultural Conflict, and Justice in Rural Russia, 1856–1914* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 271.

37 Frank, *Crime, Cultural Conflict, and Justice*, 245.

38 Sergei Terent'evich Semenov wrote about the pilgrimages to Cherlenkovo in his *Dvadtsat'-piat' let v derevne* (Petrograd, 1915), 109–12. They were also briefly chronicled by I. F. Tokmakov in his description of the city of Volokolamsk and surrounding areas, *Gorod Volokolamsk Moskovskoi gubernii i ego uezd* (Moscow, 1906), 31–32.

39 "Unwitching" is a common practice in communities that believe in witchcraft. Suspected witches are required to touch their supposed victims or to allow their victims to touch, hit, or scratch (as in this case) them in order to undo the magical harm. Though less lethal (unless the hitting and scratching get out of hand) than execution or lynching, this customary practice forces the suspect to accept responsibility for the bewitchment, thereby solidifying a lifelong reputation for witchcraft.

40 One of the criticisms levied by educated observers at the volost courts was the amount of alcohol that flowed in its chambers. Drink was an important component of village culture and sociability.

Chapter 5. Healing and Harming

1 Eve Levin, "Healers and Witches in Early Modern Russia," in *Saluting Aron Gurevich: Essays in History, Literature, and Other Related Subjects*, ed. Yelena Mazour-Matusevich and Alexandra S. Korros (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 117–18; Clare Griffin, "Bureaucracy and Knowledge Creation: The Apothecary Chancery," in *Information and Mechanisms of Communication in Russia, 1600–1850*, ed. Simon Franklin and Katherine Bowers (Cambridge: Open Book Publishers, 2017), 255–85, https://www.openbookpublishers.com/10.11647/OBP.0122/OBP.0122.01.pdf.

2 Eve Levin, "Identifying Diseases in Pre-Modern Russia," *Russian History* 35, no. 3–4 (2008): 329, 328.

3 See W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: An Historical Survey of Magic and Divination in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 281–82; and Albert Henry Buck and Thomas Lathrop Stedman, eds., *A Reference Handbook of the Medical Sciences: Embracing the Entire Range of Scientific and Practical Medicine and Allied Science*, 3rd ed. (New York: William Wood & Company, 1913), 2:695–96. Babies born "with the caul" account for less than 1 in 80,000 human births today. See Jayme Kennedy, "20 Rare and Breathtaking Images of Babies Born in the Amniotic Sac," https://www.mommyish.com/babies-born-en-caul.

4 Kateryna Dysa, *Istoriia z vid'mamy: Sudy pro chary v ukrains'kykh voevodstvakh Rechi Pospolytoi XVII–XVIII stolittia* (Kyiv: Krytyka, 2008), 194.

5 Michael Ostling, *Between the Devil and the Host: Imagining Witchcraft in Early Modern Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 124.

6 GAVO, f. 175, op. 2, d. 42 (1844–55), ll. 85 ob.–88 ob. (autopsy report), 91–92 ob. (verdict).

Chapter 6. Sex/Love/Anti-Love Magic

1 RGADA, f. 210, Belgorodskii stol, stlb. 768, ll. 135–37; and N. Ia. Novombergskii, *Koldovstvo v Moskovskoi Rusi XVII veka* (St. Petersburg: Tipografiia Al'tshulera, 1906), no. 25, 94–99.

2 E. B. Smilianskaia, *Volshebniki, bogokhul'niki, eretiki: Narodnaia religioznost' i "dukhovnye prestupleniia" v Rossii XVIII veke* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003), 84, 85, 106, 177–80; Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics: Popular Religiosity and 'Spiritual Crimes' in Eighteenth-Century Russia," trans. Liv Bliss, *Russian Studies in History* 45, no. 4 (2007): 56–58; and A. S. Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii, 1700–1740 gg.* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2000), 91, 93, 100–101.

3 Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 161.

4 On due process in Muscovite law, see George G. Weickhardt, "Due Process and Equal Justice in the Muscovite Codes," *Russian Review* 51, no. 4 (1992): 463–80.

5 The Orthodox calendar has a number of nonfasting periods when meat can be consumed, with the exception of Wednesdays and Fridays. Great Meat Fare or Great Miasoed occurs between Christmas and Cheesefare or Butter Week (Shrovetide). During the pre-lenten Week of the Publican or Sinner meat is permitted even on the traditional fast days. Great Meat Fare roughly coincides with a period when the Orthodox Church allows marriages, which begins after Theophany (Epiphany).

6 Novombergskii's text says "in the past year 164 around Holy Week," placing the event in 1656, which would postdate the 1648 trial. We assume this is a typo in the published version or a scribal error in the manuscript (*Koldovstvo v Moskovkoi Rusi*, no. 10, 58).

7 We are grateful to Professor Kateryna Dysa for pointing out the magistrates' legal creativity.

8 According to W. F. Ryan, "sevens and seventies are commonly the number of veins, sinews and joints referred to in medical spells." He notes a Greek example in Charles Steward, *Demons and the Devil: Moral Imagination in Modern Greek Society* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991), 289, no. 14. For references to some "Jewish fever amulets … call[ing] on the sickness to depart from the 248 parts of the patient," see his *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1999), 208n152.

9 On this image, see Valerie Kivelson, "Caught in the Act: An Illustration of Erotic Magic at Work," in *Dubitando: Studies in History and Culture in Honor of Donald Ostrowski*, ed. Brian Boeck, Russell E. Martin, and Daniel Rowland (Bloomington, IN: Slavica Publishers, 2012), 285–300.

10 Also called Solomonida, Solomonia. Ryan identifies her as the apocryphal midwife who delivered Jesus (*Bathhouse at Midnight*, 252).

Chapter 7. Power Relations and Hierarchy

1 Kateryna Dysa, *Witchcraft Trials and Beyond: Volhynia, Podolia, and Ruthenia, 17th-18th Centuries* (Budapest: CEU Press, 2020).

2 Kronshtadt is an island near the head of the Gulf of Finland, just over eighteen and a half miles west of St. Petersburg. In the early eighteenth century, it was already an important shipyard and naval base.

3 Boyar and chiliarch (*tysiatskii*) were already antiquated terms by the 1720s and 1730s. They fell out of use under Peter the Great (actually much earlier, in the case of chiliarch). Boyars were leading nobles; chiliarchs were military or diplomatic leaders. Their use here is indicative of the conservatism of magical language and usage.

4 This phrase is hard to parse. Both its grammar and meaning are obscure: *na nos pokliapykh, naperd zastennykh uchenikov*. We are grateful to Dr. Olga Kosheleva for her guidance.

5 For a slightly different translation of the first paragraph of the charm, see Liv Bliss's version in Elena B. Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics: Popular Religiosity and 'Spiritual Crimes' in Eighteenth-Century Russia," *Russian Studies in History* 45, no. 4 (2007): 79n84.

6 Tar was believed to ward off witchcraft. According to W. F. Ryan, in late imperial Russia it was customary "in the trans-Baikal region on St. John's Day [for] the priest [to] read a prayer at each fence-post and make a cross of fresh tar on the gates as a protection against the witches who were liable to go around in the shape of dogs and steal the milk from the cows" (*The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* [University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999], 43).

7 The reference to Mary's mantle invokes the iconographic image of the Mother of God of the Protective Veil, in which Mary protects believers with the cloak she is wearing or the veil that she is holding outstretched in her arms.

Chapter 8. Possession

1 Marcia A. Morris, trans. and ed., *Russian Tales of Demonic Possession: Translations of Savva Grudtsyn and Solomonia* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 49–62.

2 Christine D. Worobec, "How One Runaway Serf Challenged the Authority of the Russian State: The Case Against Mar'ia Semenova," in *The Human Tradition in Imperial Russia*, ed. Worobec (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009), 15.

3 L. V. Ostrovskaia, "Mirovozzrencheskie aspekty narodnoi meditsiny russkogo krest'ianskogo naseleniia Sibiri vtoroi poloviny XIX veka," in *Iz istorii sem'i i byta sibirskogo krest'ianstva v XVII–nachale XX veka: Sbornik nauchnykh trudov*, ed. M. M. Gromyko and N. A. Minenko (Novosibirsk: Novosibirskii gosudarstvennyi universitet, 1975), 136–37.

4 Christine D. Worobec, *Possessed: Women, Witches, and Demons in Imperial Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2001), 32–33.

5 I. S. Beliaev, "Ikotniki i klikushki," *Russkaia starina* (April 1905): 145–58.

6 On the evolving cultural interpretations of possession, see Worobec, *Possessed*.

7 Aleksandr Lavrov, "Izvet 1611 god," unpublished paper, 2013, with our thanks for permission to cite.

8 See Nikolai Petrovich Dolinin, *Podmoskovnye polki (Kazatskie "tabory") v natsional'no-osvoboditel'nom dvizhenii 1611–1612 gg.* (Kharkov: Universitet, 1958); and Chester S. L. Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War: The Time of Troubles and the Founding of the Romanov Dynasty* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 424–25.

9 Ivan Martynovich Zarutskii was a Don Cossack ataman and boyar in the Second False Dmitrii's council. He participated in the Cossack and gentry rebellion of 1606–7 led by Ivan Bolotnikov, then served as a supporter of the Second Dmitrii, before becoming a participant in the campaign of Hetman Stanisław Żołkiewski against Moscow and then one of the leaders of the First Militia. He was an opponent of the leadership of the Second Militia. In 1613, he went to Astrakhan and Iaik. Turned over to the authorities, he was executed in Moscow in 1614. See V. N. Bernadskii, "Konets Zarutskogo," *Uchenye zapiski Leningradskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo instituta imeni A. I. Gertsena* 19 (1939): 83–133; and Dunning, *Russia's First Civil War*, 424–25, 432, 453.

10 Already in May 1611, Liapunov, Trubetskoi, and Zarutskii were referred to as governors "who had been elected by the entire land," or by a national assembly. According to Sergei Fedorovich Platonov, "In the middle of June people in far away Shenkursk were already aware of the existence of 'the elected governors' in Moscow and were carrying out their instructions." See Platonov, *Ocherki po istorii smuty v Moskovskom gosudarstve XVI–XVII vv.: Opyt izucheniia obshchestvennago stroia i soslovnykh otnoshenii v Smutnoe vremia* (St. Petersburg: Tip. I. N. Skorokhodova, 1901), 383, 393.

11 For a description of the manuscript's properties, see A. F. Bychkov, *Opisanie tserkovno-slavianskikh i russkikh rukopisnykh sbornikov Imperatorskoi publichnoi biblioteki* (St. Petersburg: Tip. imp. nauk, 1882), 224.

12 According to legend, the holiday originated with Prince Dmitrii Ivanovich after the first major defeat of the Mongols in the 1380 Battle of Kulikovo in honor of the fallen Russian soldiers; it subsequently became a holiday to remember deceased parents.

13 W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 276, 275.

14 Alison K. Smith, "Freed Serfs without Free People: Manumission in Imperial Russia," *American Historical Review* 118, no. 4 (2013): 1029–51; https://doi.org/10.1093/ahr/118.4.1029.

Chapter 9. Satanic Pacts/Diabolism

1 Russell Zguta, "Witchcraft Trials in Seventeenth-Century Russia," *American Historical Review* 82, no. 5 (1977): 1187–207.

2 On Sisinnius and spells against fever, see W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 1999), 244–51; and A. L. Toporkov, "Sisinieva legenda i zagovory ot likhoradki u vostochnykh slavian," in *Sisinieva legenda v fol'klornykh i rukopisnykh traditsiiakh Blizhnego Vostoka, Balkan i Vostochnoi Evropy* (Moscow: Indrik, 2017), 553–88.

3 We have reconstructed from the archival manuscript (stlb. 861, ll. 33–34) and as reproduced in Toporkov, "Sisinieva legenda," 575–76. With special thanks to Olga Kosheleva for her help in decoding this devilish spell. Spells, by their nature, can defy clear, logical reading, and this one is particularly challenging.

4 Numbers five and eight are missing. Some are added in the second listing below. Ryan quotes a version of this spell in which the final devil is named Neveia, perhaps an alternative spelling of those found here. The spell explains, "Neveia is their eldest sister, the dancer who cut off the head of John the Baptist. She is the most accursed of all and if she catches a man he will not survive" (*Bathhouse at Midnight*, 248). See also modern-day equivalents in N. I. Stepanova, *Magiia na kazhdyi den'* (Moscow: Ripol klassik, 2007), 204–6.

5 *Zakliuchi*: the meaning here is obscure, and we are approximating. Perhaps "lock up" or "conclude."

6 The dates in this case are difficult to sort out, and some seem outright wrong.

7 E. B. Smilianskaia, *Volshebniki, bogokhul'niki, eretiki: Narodnaia religioznost' i "dukhovnye prestupleniia" v Rossii XVIII v.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2003), 177–79.

8 RGIA, f. 796, op. 9, d. 644 (1728) "Po donosheniiu vologodskogo arkhiereia o 'povenchanii' popom sela Diagileva Alekseem Ivanovym dvukh brakov v blizkom rodstve i o naidennykh u togo popa 'ereticheskikh pis'makh,' " described in *Opisanie del i dokumentov khraniashchikhsia v arkhive Sviateishago Pravitel'stvuiushago Sinoda* (St. Petersburg: Sinodal'naia tipografiia, 1891), 8, no. 644, 612.

9 D. A. Rovinskii, *Russkiia narodniia kartinki [vykhodivshiia do 1839 goda]* (St. Petersburg: Tip. Imperatorskoi akademii nauk, 1881), 1:133–34.

10 A. F. Kistiakovskii, "K istorii verovaniia o prodazhe dushi chertu," *Kievskaia starina* 1, no. 7 (1882): 183–84.

11 Ivanov seems to have mangled the beginning of this incantation. Usually, the words are a variation of "On the sea, on the ocean, on the great island of Buian, there stands a stone …" Nineteenth-century incantations refer to the person saying the incantation as coming across either seven or seventy "turbulent winds" (*sem' vetrov buinykh*), among other things. See A. L. Toporkov, "Russkie liubovnye zagovory XIX veka," in *Eros and Pornography in Russian Culture*, ed. Marcus Levitt and Andrei Toporkov (Moscow: Ladomir, 1998), 55, 58.

12 O. D. Zhuravel', *Siuzhet o dogovore cheloveka s d'iavolom v drevnerusskoi literature* (Novosibirsk: Sibirskii khronograf, 1996), 106.

13 Vladimir Dal' identified the plant as *mandragora* and *Centaurea scabiosa*. It was one of many plants that sorcerers collected on St. John's Day, when it was believed that magical plants' powers

were at their greatest (Ryan, *Bathhouse at Midnight*, 271).

14 A stavropegic monastery is subordinated directly to a patriarch or, in this case, the Holy Synod, rather than to a local bishop.

15 This may be Metropolitan Rafail (Zoborovskyi) of Kyiv, Halych, and Little Russia (1677–1747), appointed metropolitan in 1743.

Chapter 10. Orality/Literacy

1 On the Dream, see W. F. Ryan, *The Bathhouse at Midnight: Magic in Russia* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999), 298–99; E. M. Varentsova, "Son Bogoroditsy," in *Slovar' knizhnikov i knizhnosti drevnei Rusi* (St. Petersburg, 1998), 3, pt. 3:485–87, where the author states that the "Dream" appeared in Russian toward the end of the seventeenth or beginning of the eighteenth century. For another seventeenth-century witchcraft trial involving the Dream, this one in 1677, see RGADA, f. 210, Prikaznyi stol, stlb. 734, l. 118.

2 Afanasii Pashkov played an important role in the exile of Archpriest Avvakum, a founding figure in the Russian Old Believers' Schism. See "The Life of Archpriest Avvakum by Himself," in *Medieval Russia's Epics, Chronicles, and Tales*, ed. Serge A. Zenkovsky, rev. and enl. ed. (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1974), 412–18, 420, 422–26, 433.

3 On the cult of St. Catherine of Alexandria in Russia, see Gary Marker, *Imperial Saint: The Cult of St. Catherine and the Dawn of Female Rule in Russia* (DeKalb: Northern University Press, 2007).

4 A common Orthodox prayer, Lord God Jesus (*"Vladyko, gospodi, Iisuse"*), runs roughly as follows: Lord, God, Jesus Christ, Living Son of God, Creator of the heavens and the earth, Savior of the world, Hope of all ends of the earth and of all the distant seas, accept this prayer from your unworthy slave and fulfill my wishes in goodness. In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

5 The Russian text says "to make peasants (*krest'iane*) fear him," but the more common formulation in spells is to make Christians (*khrestiane*) fear the spellcaster, a more effective way to win success in the world. We have elided the two by translating the word as "people."

6 Sysoletin, like most of the "last names" used in this document, denotes his region of origin. Mikishka's name tells us that he came from the region of Ust-Sysol. This case takes place in the first generation of settlement of Siberia, so just about everyone came from somewhere else. Siberia was occupied by many indigenous groups prior to Russian conquest, but over the course of the seventeenth century, influxes of Russian soldiers and fur trappers, as well as criminal and political exiles, significantly changed its demographics. Most of the place names indicate migration to Siberia from the northern parts of European Russia.

7 The meaning of this word is unclear. The phrase is *molitva k bogu i k otrokom*. In its primary meaning *otrok* signifies adolescent boy—here, perhaps, the Son of God (?)—but other magical spells invoke protection from *otrok* and *otrokovitsa*, suggesting something more sinister than their literal meaning of male and female adolescent. See Document 10.5.

8 Aleksandr Lavrov, "Chelobitnaia sviashchennika Rozhdestvenskoi tserkvi Komerskoi volosti Ivana Ivanova arkhiepiskopu Vologodskomu i Belozerskomu Simonu, 1679–1680," unpublished paper, 2010, with thanks for his permission to draw on his work.

9 Simon (d. 1685), abbot of the Aleksandro-Svirskii Monastery (1660–64), archbishop of Vologda and Belozersk (October 23, 1664–1684) (P. M. Stroev, *Spiski ierarkhov i nastoiatelei monastyrei Rossiiskiia tserkvi* [St. Petersburg, 1877], 731, 992.)

10 The petitioner refers to Basil the Great's fifth homily on the Hexaemeron, "On the Vegetation of the Earth," a commentary on Genesis 1:11: "Then God said: 'Let the land sprout with vegetation —every sort of seed-bearing plant, and trees that grow seed-bearing fruit. These seeds will then

produce the kinds of plants and trees from which they came.' " The petitioner introduces only the biblical citation, not Basil the Great's commentary, which he evidently knew but could not quote from memory. See Saint Basil the Great, *The Treatise* de Spiritu Sancto*, the Nine Homilies of the* Hexaemeron *and the* Letters, trans. Blomfield Jackson (London, 1894), 76–82.

The commentary itself provides a passage that could in fact have served as a good argument for Priest Ivan:

> "Let the earth bring forth grass"; and instantly, with useful plants, appear noxious plants, with corn, hemlock, with the other nutritious plants, hellebore, monkshood, mandrake and the juice of the poppy. What then? Shall we show no gratitude for so many beneficial gifts, and reproach the Creator for those which may be harmful to our life? And shall we not reflect that all has not been created in view of the wants of our bellies? The nourishing plants, which are destined for our use, are close at hand, and known by all the world. But in creation nothing exists without a reason. The blood of the bull is a poison: ought this animal then, whose strength is so serviceable to man, not to have been created, or, if created, to have been bloodless? But you have sense enough in yourself to keep you free from deadly things. What! Sheep and goats know how to turn away from what threatens their life, discerning danger by instinct alone: and you, who have reason and the art of medicine to supply what you need, and the experience of your forebears to tell you to avoid all that is dangerous, you tell me that you find it difficult to keep yourself from poisons! But not a single thing has been created without reason, not a single thing is useless. One serves as food to some animal; medicine has found in another a relief for one of our maladies. Thus the starling eats hemlock, its constitution rendering it insusceptible to the action of the poison…. There are even circumstances where poisons are useful to men; with mandrake doctors give us sleep; with opium they lull violent pain. Hemlock has ere now been used to appease the rage of unruly diseases; and many times hellebore has taken away long standing disease (5:4, 77–78).

11 Presumably Ivan had in mind the passage from Genesis quoted above.

12 The priest is referring to the following passage from the Gospel of Luke:

> And a woman having an issue of blood twelve years, which had spent all her living upon physicians, neither could be healed of any, came behind him, and touched the border of his garment: and immediately her issue of blood stanched. And Jesus said: "Who touched me?" When all denied, Peter and they that were with him said, "Master, the multitude throng thee and press thee, and sayest thou, 'Who touched me?'" And Jesus said: "Somebody hath touched me: for I perceive that virtue is gone out of me." And when the woman saw that she was not hid, she came trembling, and falling down before him, she declared unto him before all the people for what cause she had touched him, and how she was healed immediately. And he said unto her, "Daughter, be of good comfort: thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace" (Luke 8:43–48).

13 Julian the Apostate was a Roman Emperor, born 330 CE; reigned 361–63. He received his epithet, "the Apostate," because he attempted to undo Constantine's affirmation of Christianity and restore paganism in the empire. Legend identifies the unnamed woman cured of her long-term bleeding by Christ's robe with St. Veronica, who brought a handkerchief to Jesus Christ during the procession of the Cross. According to Eusebius of Caesarea, the woman came from Caesarea Philippi, and next to her house stood a statue of Christ, out from beneath which grew a certain grass that cured diseases. It is not clear where Priest Ivan got the story about the destruction of the image by Julian. Alesksandr Lavrov suggests that it may have come through the *Chet'i Minei*—that is, the books of readings for church services—from the entry for August 16. See E. N. Meshcherskaia and D. V. Zaitsev, "Veronika," *Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia* (Moscow: Tserkovnonauchnyi tsentr "Pravoslavnaia entsiklopediia," 2004), 7. We thank Professor Lavrov for his commentary.

14 Cosmas and Damian were early martyrs, who are venerated as saints in the Eastern Orthodox Church for being selfless physicians, who acted out of the love of Christ and humans.

15 He certainly did! Joshua ben Sira was the author of the Old Testament Book of Ecclesiasticus. Chapter 38 begins as follows: "1. Honor physicians for their services, for the Lord created them; 2. for their gift of healing comes from the Most High, and they are rewarded by the king. 3. The skill of physicians makes them distinguished, and in the presence of the great they are admired."

16 Ryan, *Bathhouse at Midnight*, 16–17.

17 Cyprian started his career as a magician in third-century Antioch. He was approached by the young Aglaid for help making the maiden Justina fall in love with him. During her conversion to Christianity, Justina vowed to preserve her virginity. On several occasions Cyprian dispatched demons to rape Justina, but she was able to chase them away by saying prayers and making the sign of the cross. Seeing the futility of his magic, Cyprian burned his magical texts and converted to Christianity. Both he and Justina became martyrs to the faith. St. Cyprian's prayer of exorcism was included in the 1505 *Book of Needs* (Trebnik) compiled by the monk and future metropolitan Makarii, and later in Peter Mohyla's 1646 *Book of Needs*, which include the religious rites that parish priests commonly use. The 1646 compendium of prayers came under suspicion by the Russian Holy Synod in the eighteenth century as having been influenced by Catholicism, but it nevertheless still circulated widely in manuscript form. St. Cyprian's exorcism prayer is in fact a series of exorcisms that were connected not only to Cyprian but also to Basil the Great, St. Gregory, John the Forerunner (the Baptist), and others. See A. L. Toporkov, ed., *Russkie zagovory iz rukopisnykh istochnikov XVII–pervoi poloviny XIX v.* (Moscow: Indrik, 2010), 748–49; and A. S. Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia v Rossii, 1700–1740 gg.* (Moscow: Drevlekhranilishche, 2000), 129.

18 Lavrov, *Koldovstvo i religiia*, 190.

19 SS Zosima and Savatii were the founders of the fifteenth-century Solovetskii Monastery, which is located on the shores of the White Sea in northern Russia.

20 "Righteous Bogolep" (1660–1667), the son of the Moscow merchant Ushakov family, attained the highest monastic order before his death at age seven. Bogolep means "worthy of God."

21 Feofan Prokopovich was initially bishop of Pskov (1718–25), and then after Peter I's death, archbishop of Novgorod and Lutsk (1725–36).

22 N. N. Pokrovskii, "Tetrad' zagovorov 1734 goda," in *Nauchnyi ateizm, religiia i sovremennost'*, ed. A. T. Moskalenko (Novosibirsk: Nauka, Sibirskoe otdelenie, 1987), 239–41.

23 For a very early example, see A. L. Toporkov, "Gramota no. 521: Zagovor ili liubovnaia zapiska?," in *Slovo i kul'tura*, ed. T. A. Agapkina et al. (Moscow: Indrik, 1998), 2:230–41.

24 Pokrovskii, "Tetrad' zagovorov," 242–47.

25 This verse is among the psalms ascribed to the biblical king David after he had fought in single combat with Goliath, http://st-takla.org/pub_Deuterocanon/Deuterocanon-Apocrypha_El-

Asfar_El-Kanoneya_El-Tanya_10-Psalm151-El-Mazmoor-151.html.

26 Incantations could include colorful names for demons. In the eighteenth century, investigators learned about Satanael, the omnipotent demon of evil who is accompanied by "his royal consort Satonitsa, thirty-three demons, and three devils" or other "fallen Satanic powers, Satanic minions and servitors"; the "bald demon"; Baba Yaga and her brothers; the "limp-man devil" [*vial-muzh chort*]; the "demon Pilatata"; the devils "Zesleder, Poraston, Korzhan, Ardun, and Kupalolaka"; the "demon Poluekht," and others. The black notebook of the copyist Semen Tsitrov cites the "Great Black Tsar" Veliger, the "Great Prince" Itas, "his crooked Highness" Irod, the "Tsar, Prince, and Great Devil Aspid," the "Prince and Great Devil Vasilisk," and the princely devils Enarei, Semen, Indik, and Khalei. Under questioning, Tsitrov added the names of the devils Verzaul, Mafava, Saltsa, and Sufava. See Elena B. Smilianskaia, "Witches, Blasphemers, and Heretics: Popular Religiosity and 'Religious Crimes' in Eighteenth-Century Russia," trans. Liv Bliss, *Russian Studies in History* 45, no. 4 (2007): 46–47. See also Document 9.2.

27 *Ili ot otroka ili ot otrokovitse:* The meaning of these words is unclear. In their primary meaning *otrok* and *otrokovitsa* signify adolescent boy and girl, but here they suggest something more sinister. See also the equally opaque usage in Document 10.1.

Chapter 11. Specialists in Magic

1 William Rowley, Thomas Dekker, and John Ford, "The Witch of Edmonton," *Act IV, Scene I* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, [n.d. c1900]), http://www.luminarium.org/editions/witchofedmonton.htm.

2 Aleksandr Lavrov, "Otpiska dvinskogo voevody Andreia Artamonovicha Matveeva tsariam Ivanu i Petru Alekseevichu ob obvinennykh v koldovstve strel'tse Ivane Goldobine, streletskoi zhene Fedos'e Belousikhe i Fekle, rabotnitse kholopa Grigoriia Tolmacheva mezhdu 10 i 18 ianvaria 1692 g.," unpublished paper, 2010. We thank Professor Lavrov for allowing us to draw on these insights.

3 On the significance of Archangel in integrating the Muscovite state into the world economy, see J. T. Kotilaine, *Russia's Foreign Trade and Economic Expansion in the Seventeenth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2005).

4 T. V. Starostina, "Ob opale A. S. Matveeva v sviazi s sysknym delom 1676–1677 gg. o khranenii zagovornykh pisem," *Uchenye zapiski Karelo-Finskogo universiteta*, vol. 2, pt. 1: *Istoricheskie i filologicheskie nauki* (Petrozavodsk, 1947): 44–89.

5 Andrei Andreevich Vinius (1641–1717) was a state secretary (*dumnyi d'iak*)—that is, he occupied the very highest administrative rank. He served in the Ambassadorial Chancellery and then became head of the Apothecary Chancellery (c. 1693), the Siberian Chancellery, and the Artillery Chancellery.

6 While the precise type of plant discussed here is not entirely clear, the nineteenth-century ethnographer and lexicographer Vladimir Ivanovich Dal' included an entry on the plant called *deviatil'nik* in his annotated dictionary. He identified it as *Achillea nobilis*, which is the Latin name for the noble yarrow, a plant native to Eurasia. Together with sunflowers, daisies, and asters, it belongs to the Asteraceae family. Some of these flowers are known to have healing properties. See Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivago velikoruskago iazyka* (St. Petersburg: Izd. knigoprodavtsa-tipografa M. O. Vol'f, 1880), 1:425.

7 Dal' defined *volosatik* as follows: "*Volosatik: m. volosets sib.,* is an aquatic worm, thin as a thread. *Gordius Aquaticus* lives in still waters. It is harmless and does not infiltrate humans. An uncoated worm of warm regions, *Filaria medinensis* (Guinea worm) lives under the skin of humans and causes skin ulcers in humans and animals. It is transmitted through stagnant drinking water." See Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar'*, 1:235.

8 P. Litvinova, "Zakrutki i zalomki," *Kievskaia starina*, no. 3 (1899): 139–41.

9 Bishop Gervasyi (Lyntsevskyi) headed the diocese of Pereiaslav and Boryspil at this time.

10 The first three prayers and hymns and the Creed are part of the Orthodox liturgical service. The prayer to Mary is part of the all-night vigil or vespers.

11 Wolfgang Behringer, *Witchcraft Persecutions in Bavaria: Popular Magic, Religious Zealotry and Reason of State in Early Modern Europe*, trans. J. C. Grayson and David Lederer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 164–66, 341–44; and David Warren Sabean, "The Sacred Bond of Unity: Community through the Eyes of a Thirteen-Year-Old Witch (1683)," in *The Power in the Blood: Popular Culture and Village Discourse in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 94–112.

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